BING

Summer 2011

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Bing Crosby Enterprises: www.BingCrosby.com
BING magazine: www.bingmagazine.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

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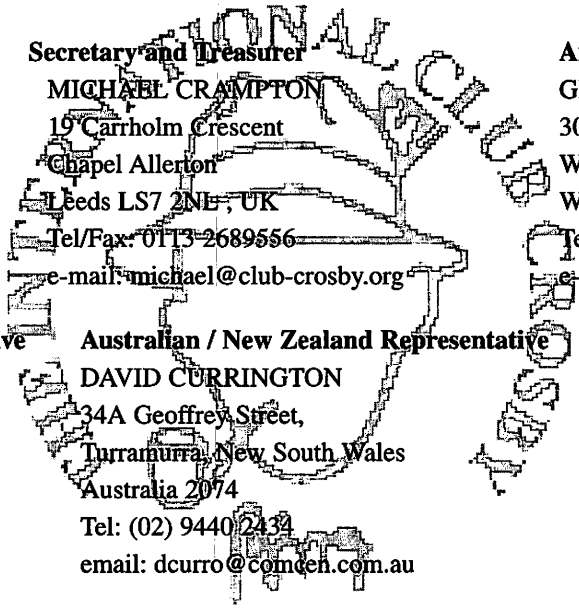

Magazine Editor
MALCOLM MACFARLANE
3 Osborne Close
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 2EE, UK
Tel: 01625 528942
e-mail: Macwilmslo@aol.com

Secretary and Treasurer
MICHAEL CRAMPTON
19 Carrholm Crescent
Chapel Allerton
Leeds LS7 2NE, UK
Tel/Fax: 0113 2689556
e-mail: michael@club-crosby.org

American Co-Editor
GREG VAN BEEK
3006 Emerald Street,
West Bend
Wisconsin 53095, USA
Tel: (262) 343-2986
e-mail: tvanbeek@execpc.com

American / Canadian Representative
F.B. (Wig) WIGGINS
5608 North 34th Street
Arlington
Virginia 22207, USA
Tel/Fax: (703) 241-5608
e-mail: wigbing@hotmail.com

Australian / New Zealand Representative
DAVID CURRINGTON
34A Geoffrey Street,
Turramurra, New South Wales
Australia 2074
Tel: (02) 9440 2434
email: dcurro@comcen.com.au

CONTRIBUTORS
American Contributors: Bob Achorn / Martin McQuade / John Newton / Jon Oye / Carolyn Schneider
British Contributors: J. Richard Baker / Ken Crossland / Bob Halls / Keith Parkinson / John Walton
Canadian Contributor: Gord Atkinson

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(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

Warm wishes to all members, both new and veteran, of the World's oldest active fan club, now well into its seventy-fifth year. This past spring has been an especially devastating time to a good portion of the United States, with a record number of tornadoes in the Midwest that caused massive destruction and loss of life. It is our sincere hope that all ICC members and their families have remained safe despite Mother Nature's wrath.

On a more pleasant note, we are pleased to learn that Kathryn Crosby has recovered sufficiently from injuries suffered in a car accident last November to make a personal appearance at the Crosby Scholars scholarship event this past May, and photos taken while there show her looking fit and well. We continue to wish her our best in her recovery.

We hope many of you are enjoying the special ICC CD release offered with the spring issue commemorating both our 75th anniversary, and the 75th anniversary of Bing beginning his ten-year tenure as host of the popular Kraft Music Hall radio program. If you have an interest in these rare air checks from Bing's first season on the air for Kraft, be sure to get the CD while you can.

In addition, we hope you have been supporting the Collectors' Choice CD & DVD releases made possible via the Bing Crosby Enterprises team. As you will read later in this issue, these releases won't be in print forever (indeed some members have already expressed difficulty in obtaining some of them), so do not hesitate if you wish to add this rare material to your collections. We look forward to more releases from Bing Crosby Enterprises later this year.

Speaking of Bing Crosby Enterprises, to mark Bing's 108th birthday on May 3rd, a newly revamped BingCrosby.com website was unveiled by them, with much useful information, including photo, audio, and video archives, and so much more. Members with access to the internet are encouraged to give it a look and visit often, as new content is to be added regularly. Richard Baker has a more detailed review on a subsequent page.

Before turning it over to Malcolm, I'd just like to mention that I have recently become owner of a new Android cell phone, and as a result, have a new telephone number, which can be found on the inside cover (opposite of this page).

Greg Van Beek

Thanks, Greg. There will be many of you who, like me, do not know what an Android cell phone is. I had to look it up on the Internet and it sounds as though it's quite a remarkable gadget. I must move with the times (one of these days) as all my mobile phone can do is make and receive calls (when I occasionally switch it on!).

An interesting mixed bag in the magazine for you this time around. John Newton is back with an article about Bing's "B" masters (you'll have to read it to find out what they were) and Martin McQuade celebrates the centenary of Ronald Reagan's birth with a look at the overlaps between him and Der Bingle. As we continue to enjoy our club's 75th anniversary, Greg Van Beek completes his account of the development of Club Crosby and I chime in with some background on the International Crosby Circle.

In May, I went to the USA to research the book on Rosemary Clooney being prepared by Ken Crossland and me. In the process I met many people who had nice things to say about Bing as you will read later in this issue. In addition, we have tracked down one of the Bob Mitchell Boys Choir – Tony Butala (later of The Lettermen) – and we also take a look at Mildred Bailey, who played an important part in Bing's early career.

All of the regular features are in place. Keith Parkinson describes Bing's Hollywood, Ken Crossland considers the recent releases on CD and other formats, Gord Atkinson remembers a very special anniversary cake for Bing and as usual we have some great letters from members. There is plenty more too so I'll let you get on with reading it.

The picture on our back cover has been provided by Greg Van Beek and shows Bing and Anissa ('Buffy') Jones in the ABC-TV presentation *Feelin' Groovy at Marine World* broadcast on February 15, 1969.

Pat and I will be at Leeds for the meeting on October 2 and hope to see many of you there. We'll have a get-together at the hotel on the night before too.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Summer is traditionally a quiet period for Crosby activity and this year is no exception. After the fulsome releases from BCE and Universal we have an opportunity to reflect on the good things that have come our way this past couple of years. Most of Bing's commercial recordings have now been restored and digitised and the remaining titles are known to BCE who no doubt have plans to bring us more surprises in the coming years.

It is very easy to take for granted the work carried out by those who have given us these rare and very good quality CDs and here I would like to reiterate our thanks and appreciation to Robert S. Bader and his team for an excellent set of professionally produced discs. We await further releases with eager anticipation.

It is a pleasure in this issue to note that there are more new members than those that we have lost. Unfortunately, the passing of time claims so many of our members and the viability of running the club comes into question as numbers decline. We are very fortunate to have benefactors who make substantial donations each year and thus we have avoided having to increase the subscription or reduce the number of issues these past few years. The finances are fine until the end of 2012 but I would ask members to be supportive of our CD and calendar sales and perhaps you might include a small donation when next renewing your subscription.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members of ICC with a wish that their involvement with the club will bring them interest and enjoyment as they interact with their fellow Bing enthusiasts.

UNITED STATES

Sharon Thomas (Hampton, New Jersey), David Soule (South Portland, Maine), Michael Kearsey (Portland, Oregon), Robert Phillips (Fairfax, Virginia), Debbie Murphy (Vero Beach, Florida), Carol Edelblute (Hartford, Wisconsin), Zane Johnson (Crystal, Minnesota), Stuart Chadde (Waukegan, Illinois), Ron Ranke (Barrington, Illinois), Katherine Dyess (Jackson, Wyoming), Charles Nolan (Central Square, New York) and Phillip Turfle (Waynesboro, Pennsylvania).

UNITED KINGDOM

Mr S E Gibbon (Slough, Berks), Ray Norton (Walton-on- Thames).

DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by May Affeck who kindly donated a legacy on behalf of the late Ray Forster of Broadgreen, Liverpool. May's generous contribution is supported by beneficent gifts from: -

Gerard Hanlon, Michael Collins, Bill Wesley, Bill Green, A. W. Skurls, Renato Failace, Seamus Kelly, Colin Stewart, Chris Hitchcock, Klaus Halm, Arthur Blood, Nicholas Morrison, John Bignell, Charles Wilkinson and Robert Larkin

Donations and legacies are very welcome and gratefully acknowledged and we thank our benefactors for their continuing support. If, inadvertently, we fail to mention your donation, please advise and we will make good in the next issue of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness we draw members' attention to the passing of the following members –

Cyril Brown (Nantwich, Cheshire) aged 91 years, Tony Heasman (Northolt, Middlesex) aged 89 years, and Ray Forster (Broadgreen, Liverpool) aged 89 years.

Tony Heasman was a modest and sociable member and he was passionate about his music. If you are interested in taking on his collection then you should contact his daughter Brenda on 07794 287 156 or at:

Brenda.cobley@ntlworld.com.

All three members were lifelong Bing enthusiasts and we extend our sincere condolences to their families.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 1 to 7 (Sepia Records)

These attractive CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £6.50 and the price for Europe £7.00. Members in the US & Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington. The price for members in the rest of the world is £8. Volume 8 will be available in October.

BING CROSBY and the KRAFT MUSIC HALL – ICC 75th anniversary issue.

This much appreciated CD remains available from me and you are welcome to send for additional copies if you require them.

CROSBY CALENDAR 2012

For 2012 we are trying to gauge accurate numbers so that we do not either run out of calendars or order too many. Please book your calendars now to avoid disappointment later in the year. Your support in purchasing your calendar(s) will be very much appreciated.

LEEDS 2011 (46th meeting)

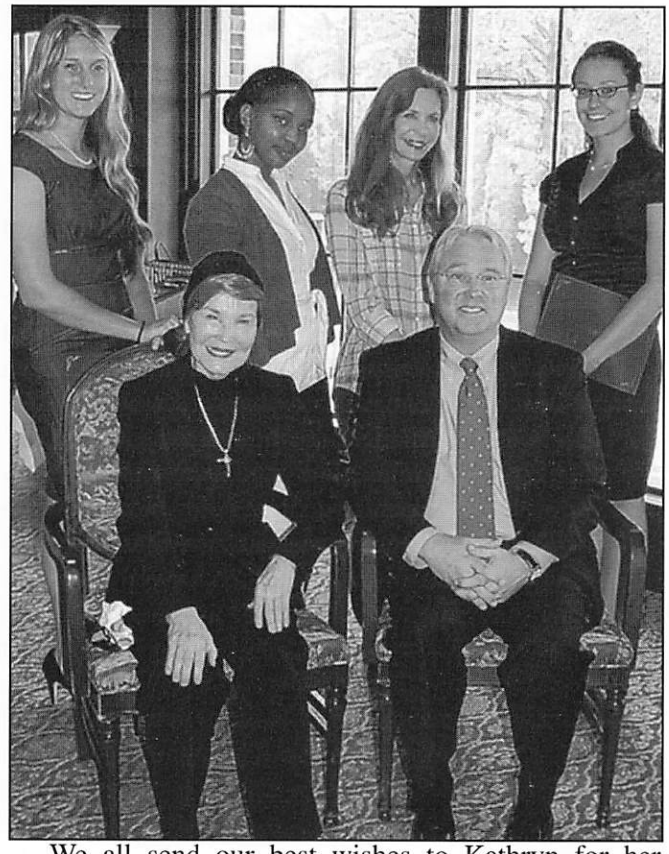
Sunday October 2nd 2011 is the date and I look forward to renewing old friendships and making new ones at this always enjoyable event.

Michael Crampton

Kathryn Crosby

Many members have been concerned about our Honorary President following her serious auto accident last November. Kathryn suffered multiple injuries but she has surprised her doctors by the speed of her recovery. She has been undertaking ballet type exercises to help regain her fitness and it was good to read about her attendance at the Crosby Scholars Invitational Breakfast of Champions at the Bermuda Run Country Club, North Carolina on May 25.

Daughter Mary attended with her and the photo (courtesy of the *Winston-Salem Journal*) shows Kathryn Crosby (front left), W. Randolph Woodson (chancellor at N.C. State University) and Mary Crosby (second from right in back) with students Meredith McCliment, Desiree Porter and Emily Davis (from back left).



We all send our best wishes to Kathryn for her continuing recovery.

The importance of the golf tournament organised by Kathryn in Winston-Salem following the withdrawal of the Crosby name from the Pebble Beach location has often not been truly recognised. During its 17 years in Winston-Salem, the tournament raised more than $18 million for local and national charities. The Crosby Scholars Program was begun in 1992 by the organizers of The CROSBY, which in turn was hosted and coordinated by the Sara Lee Corporation, with corporate sponsors from across the nation. Since 1996, the Program has been available to students in grades 6-12 attending public school in Forsyth County. The Program has graduated over 4,151 Crosby Scholars and awarded $3 million in Last Dollar Grant scholarships to students in Forsyth County.

Bing would have been delighted to see how much money has been raised for charity from the 'little' golf tournament in his name he started in Rancho Santa Fe back in 1937.

The Collectors' Choice situation

Members may be wondering why there have not been any announcements of new releases by Bing Crosby Enterprises (BCE) and Collectors' Choice Music (CCM).

By way of background, we had news that CCM and its sister companies including Deep Discount DVD, Critics' Choice Video, Heartland Music and Serenade Music, were sold by Infinity Resources to California-

based entertainment media wholesaler Super D in November 2010.

Jeff Walker, President of Super D, confirmed that the company's decision to purchase Infinity's assets was largely to acquire the lucrative Deep Discount website.

The *Orange County Register* reported Walker's statement that Super D is "moving our business toward direct-to-consumer sales rather than retailers because there are fewer stores with less selection" and that the company is "moving more into DVDs and a good portion of Infinity is in DVDs." Super D's press release makes no mention of the catalogue's label operations, concentrating only on the acquisition of the companies' massive inventories. (Through its catalogue, CCM offers releases from all labels as well as those produced in-house.)

We have since heard that Gordon Anderson (who worked closely with Robert Bader on the Bing releases) has stepped down from his post as Senior Vice President and General Manager of CCM. The Collectors' Choice label is now just a small part of Super D's business and with no new announcements about Crosby releases, it may be that BCE will be looking for different outlets in the future. Meanwhile, it is worrying to see that *The Crosby Christmas Sessions*, *The Crosby-Clooney Radio Sessions* and *Bing Crosby Sings the Sinatra Songbook* CDs are no longer being offered by CCM on its web site. Amazon still has the Christmas CD on offer but it says that it has run out of the other two releases. Fortunately the tracks are still available as downloads.

The demise of the compact disc has been forecast for a year or two now as downloads and other forms of digital storage become more popular. It may well be that those companies selling CDs are cutting back on costs to survive and this may mean even less stock is held.

The lesson now is to buy any new releases from Bing Crosby Enterprises as soon as you see them and I apologise for suggesting in an earlier issue that the CCM CDs would remain available for some time.

FOOTNOTE: As we went to press, we had feedback from members who had just received the latest Collectors' Choice catalogue. Apparently there isn't one of the BCE CDs in it! There are still some left on the CCM web site though.

In Search of Rosemary Clooney

As part of the research for the book about Rosemary Clooney being prepared by Ken Crossland and your Editor, I have been interviewing a number of people who also have Crosby connections. I'll mention them in the order I contacted them.

Gary Giddins

I had a good telephone chat with Gary in March and naturally the conversation turned to Bing matters. Gary said that he is a little behind schedule for the publication of the second volume of his book due out in October 2012. He had thought that he had finished his research but "tons of paperwork" were discovered by Robert Bader and made available to Gary. There was a lot of material he had not been expecting which he feels will surprise people, especially regarding Bing's work during WWII with the armed forces. Bing took great trouble to write a vast number of letters to soldiers and to their relatives, drafting them in long hand for his secretary to type up. He also had lots of his recordings supplied to every troopship and as we know the GIs voted Bing as the person who had done most for them during the war.

Gary said that there might be a few issues regarding Dixie and the first family which fans may not like but from Gary's perspective he finds that the more he digs into the paperwork, the more he finds himself admiring Bing enormously—as a human being as well as an artist. Gary will of course discuss the Gary Crosby book and the *Hollow Man* tome in his book. Mr. Giddins interviewed Gary Crosby at length and found that he "backstepped" on many of the stories in *Going My Own Way*.

Gary Giddins summed it up by saying that if you weigh it all together, Bing "comes off as an extraordinary man."

I shall be playing the tape of my interview with Gary about Bing at the Leeds meeting.

Michael Feinstein

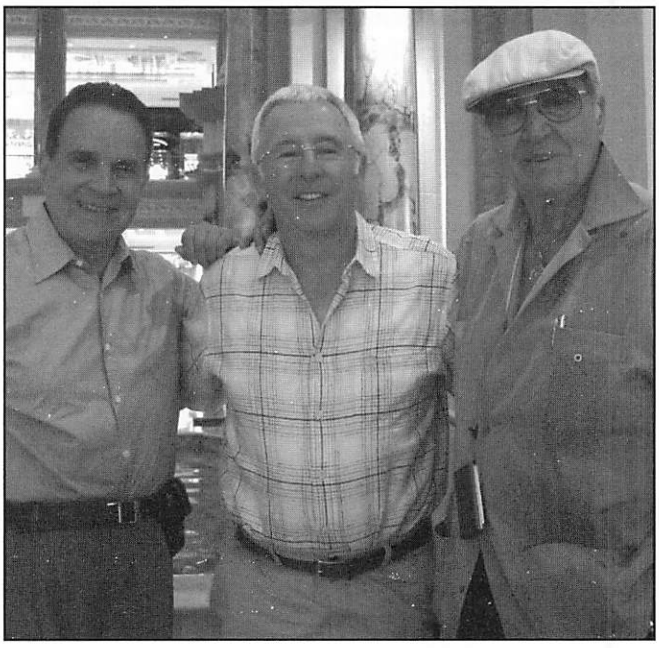
I caught up with Michael in London in April when he was appearing at the Leicester Square Theatre. He also starred on the long running "Friday Night Is Music Night" show on BBC Radio 2 during his visit. Michael kindly gave me a lot of his time to discuss Rosemary and then I videoed him talking about Bing. The video will be shown at the Leeds meeting on October 2.

Michael described how he first discovered the early Crosby recordings when he was a young boy in Columbus, Ohio. His favourite Bing period is the late 20s and the early 30s although he found the 1970s recordings "extraordinary." Michael is, as we know, a great collector and he told me that he will send a rare Bing tape over for us to play at Leeds. He provided many songs from the Woodbury shows to us a year or two back and I told him how much the CD we issued of these had been appreciated by members. Michael paid a huge tribute to the work done by Geoff Milne in editing the tracks for the CD.

Rich Little

Pat and I had three weeks in the USA in May and we stopped off in Las Vegas to get over the jet lag. It doesn't matter if you wake at 3 a.m. there – you can get up and do plenty of things. Rich Little lives in Las Vegas and we had a memorable meal and evening out with him. As we

know, Rich is a huge admirer of Bing and he also gave me a video interview for Leeds. The TV series he had in 1975-76 has recently been issued as a box set. One of Rich's guests was Bing, and Rich described how the appearance came about. We'll show the Bing excerpt from the show at Leeds too.



Rich Little (left) and Steve Rossi (right) keep your Editor on his feet!

Steve Rossi

Steve came along with Rich Little for a meal at Joe's Stone Crab Restaurant. I knew that Steve had been part of the successful Allen & Rossi comedy team which was active from 1957 until 1968. They appeared on over 700 television shows with no less than 44 appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show, including three of the four Ed Sullivan episodes on which The Beatles appeared. What I didn't know was that Steve had been part of the Bob Mitchell Boys Choir and had been in *Going My Way* and *The Bells of St. Mary's*. There was a possibility of Steve singing a duet with Bing in the first film but it did not come to fruition. Steve remembered talking to Bing in his dressing room in 1944 and he admired the facilities and said how great it must be to get the kind of treatment Bing received. Bing told him that with luck Steve could have the same in years to come. Fast forward to 1966 and Allen & Rossi are making a film called *The Last of the Secret Agents?* at Paramount. Steve is allocated a dressing room which seems familiar. There on the wall is a plaque indicating that it was Bing's dressing room! Steve took a photo of the plaque and some years later he got Bing to autograph it for him.

Dante DiPaolo

Dante was Rosemary Clooney's second husband. He was a successful dancer and he had originally met Rosemary in 1952 when he had to teach her to dance a few steps for the Bob Hope film *Here Come the Girls*. However as a youth, he played the character of "Turkey" in *The Starmaker* (1939) with Bing. Pat and I saw Dante at the Beverly Hills Hilton and in recalling *The Starmaker*, Dante (now 85) leapt into song with "Go Fly a Kite" and was word perfect after all these years! He then gave us a rendition of "If I Was a Millionaire". For each of his four auditions for the film, Dante sang "Stardust". Dante spoke very warmly of Bing. After he re-connected with Rosemary in 1973, he saw a lot of Bing particularly on the trips to the Palladium in 1976 and 1977.

Monsita Botwick

Monsita is Rosemary Clooney's younger daughter and we met up with her at the West Hollywood home of Roger Vorce, who was Rosie's agent for many years. His other clients included Liberace and Johnny Cash. Monsita is a lovely lady and she had a nice Bing anecdote about how as a teenage girl she had to stand-in for her mother at a dinner engagement with Bing, Harry Crosby and her sister Maria. In effect, she was Bing's date! Monsita clearly enjoyed the occasion and I captured her story on video for the Leeds audience.

Nick Clooney

Rosemary's brother, the father of George Clooney, as well as a very successful broadcaster and writer in his own right. Nick lives in Kentucky and we visited him at his home and later went out to dinner with him and his charming wife, Nina. Like his sister, he is a huge Crosby admirer and he had a fine story about hearing Bing sing "White Christmas" at a party which he shared with me on video for those lucky enough to be attending Leeds this year. You'll read more about it in our next issue.

Pat and Malcolm Macfarlane (right) enjoy an evening out with Nick and Nina Clooney at Caproni's in Maysville, Kentucky.

Nick kindly agreed to become an honorary member of the ICC and it is great to have him on board. Wig always remembers Rosemary as the first (and truly interested) honorary member that he and Laura brought into the club.

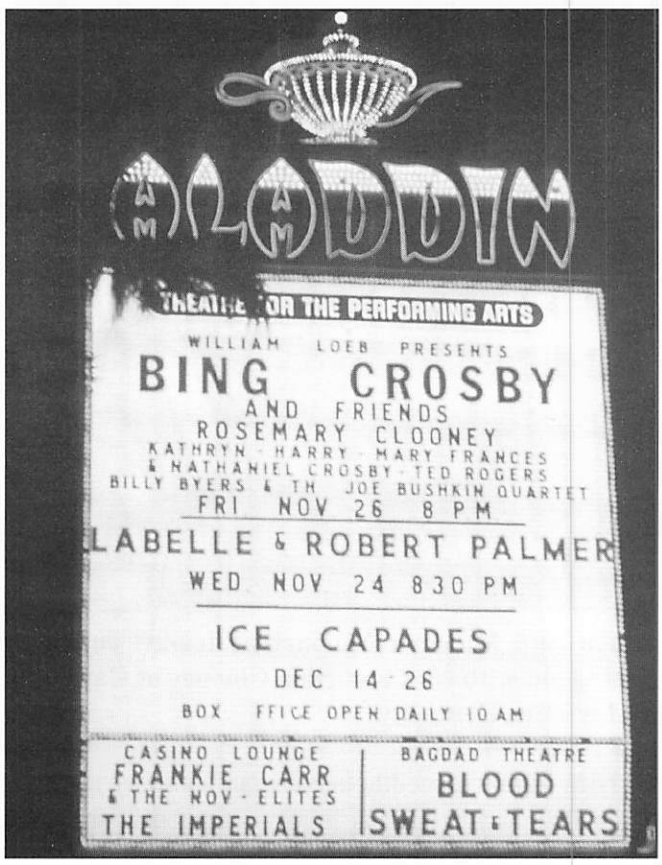
Brook Babcock

Brook is an ICC member and we bumped into each other at The Rosemary Clooney House in Augusta, Kentucky. His great uncle was Jimmy Van Heusen (whose real name was Chester Babcock) and Brook only met him twice before he died. He did recall the nice birthday presents Jimmy would send him though. Brook now finds himself running the Van Heusen Music Corporation from his home in Nashville, Tennessee and he showed me hundreds of photos on his laptop from Jimmy's collection. Many of the photos included Bing, and Brook has very kindly released some of these to the ICC for our use.

Bill Loeb

Bill was Rosemary's manager for many years until 1981 and he produced Bing's appearances in Las Vegas and at the Uris Theatre in New York in 1976. I asked him what Bing was like and he was fulsome in his praise saying:

"...he was one of the nicest people – the most professional I have ever been involved with – he had no ego, he had no demands, he didn't travel with an entourage. He was very much to himself and he had a saying that he would only get involved with people who knew more about it than he did... A very private person, he didn't go out partying after shows. He would have his cereal at a coffee shop and go back and go to bed. He was a very simple human being and to me that was very impressive...I had tremendous respect for him and it was a marvellous experience in my career."



Mr. Loeb presents Bing for his only Las Vegas concert.

The Ledger Independent

This is the local paper in Maysville, Kentucky where Rosemary was born. They got wind that a Clooney biographer was in the area and they duly interviewed me. I explained how the Perry Como volume and now the Clooney book had arisen out of my Crosby interests and the paper publicised this giving me front page coverage. Maysville is a smallish town with a population of 8000 but nevertheless I was surprised to be recognised on several occasions the next day as we explored the town. The article can still be seen at www.maysville-online.com/ . Search against my name to find it.

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It has been a truly wonderful experience researching Rosemary's life and meeting so many interesting people with a Bing connection.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Bing's 108th birthday celebration

On May 3, the 108th birthday of Bing Crosby was celebrated in Spokane with "Classic Movies at the Bing." The celebration was put on by the Advocates for The Bing Crosby Theater. Admission was free but a $5 donation was suggested with all proceeds going to supporting future movies.

There was free cake and punch starting at 6 p.m. and then an assortment of Bing Crosby short features on the screen. The main film shown starting at 7 p.m. was *The Country Girl*. The press release for the event described *The Country Girl* as being:

> "...unlike any movie Bing Crosby had made before—a serious study of a man in crisis. For his performance as an alcoholic actor wilting under the pressure of trying to re-establish his career, Bing was nominated for an Oscar. His character is bolstered by a devoted wife with the strengths he does not have. Grace Kelly—also playing counter-type as a doughty housewife—won the Oscar for Best Actress for her performance. She finds in William Holden the strengths Bing's character does not have. Who wins her?"

An Evening with Bing Crosby

Bert Bishop returns to our pages with a report on a Crosby event in Essex.

For many years now Stuart Brockbank has been presenting 'An Evening with Bing Crosby' both at the Laurie Centre, Romford, and in recent times at Hornchurch library. Originally it was by playing 78 rpm records, but that eventually progressed to compact discs.

Mainly local residents, but some from far afield, including myself, have attended over the years paying a

modest sum for light refreshments during the intermission.

Sadly, this year, Stuart has been in poor health but was able to play the first half of his programme on Wednesday, 2nd March before handing over to George Saddington at the interval.

A second evening took place on the 27th April which ICC member **Trevor Wagstaff** once more attended. Although Stuart selected the tracks to be played, George again played host, with appropriate commentary, for the entire programme. The mix of tracks at these presentations is very varied and covers a considerable period of Bing's career, but there is usually a link if not a theme other than Bing himself, of course.

Trevor is well acquainted with Stuart and has presented him with CDs to augment his collection and Stuart is always happy to chat during the interval and play pre-requested songs from Bing's vast musical portfolio.

Stuart's evenings always command a full house but are not always just Bing as he has a great interest in, and is very knowledgeable about, British Dance Bands of the 'Thirties and Al Bowlly in particular. We wish Stuart well and hope that he may be able to continue to arrange these very enjoyable get-togethers for those who enjoy our kind of music.

Bert Bishop

CROONING WITH A CROSBY

Cheryl D'Cruz reviews The Mayor's Charity Concert, Camberley Theatre. Thursday 24th February 2011

Let's cut to the chase: I've never been into Bing Crosby! I know he was one of the biggest recording stars of the twentieth century and that 34 years after his death he's probably got more fans than Madonna, but I'm not one of them! So what do I have against him? Nothing, apart from *White Christmas*! My parents played that record every December 25th and the monotony of it did my head in! Mind you that was nothing compared to the trauma of "The Little Drummer Boy/Peace on Earth", a dubious collaboration between "The Old Groaner" and the master of pop intellectualism, David Bowie.

So would a concert at the Camberley Theatre with Bing Crosby's nephew topping the bill, make a difference? Surprisingly yes because I was genuinely won over by the smooth, eloquent brilliance of Howard Crosby's voice. It would be unfair to dismiss him as a crooner imitating a famous relative: that belittles the scale of his talent. This is a man who sings jazz with the verve of Frank Sinatra, belts out a Broadway anthem with understated ease, and who delivers a ballad with touching sensitivity.

With superb backing from Gwen Lyons on the harp and Randy Kaping on the piano, *String & Sing* was a celebration of Bing Crosby's legacy that fused Irish and American folk music with the rolling chords of jazz and stride piano. Uncle Bing would have been proud! There were no stage props or fancy gimmicks just a grand piano, a Yamaha keyboard, and a harp mounted on a tripod. I guess that keeping the set simple encourages an intimacy between the performer and the audience!

Howard Crosby (centre) with Gwen Lyons and Randy Kaping.

Gwen Lyons opened the show with a folk song selection that aptly displayed the elegant soprano qualities of her voice. Shimmering in the white/blue glow of a lone spotlight she was like a woman on a journey, guiding the audience through the lyrical complexities of love, despair and regeneration. Randy accompanied her on three of the numbers adding low smooth vocals and the subtle, mellifluous influence of a jazz beat.

This was the starter to a hugely satisfying main course, a medley of West End and Broadway showstoppers crowned with a generous helping of Bing Crosby hits, including a recently discovered number recorded in the 1950s but never actually released until now. Like the consummate showman working an audience, Howard interspersed each song break with jokes, anecdotes and nuggets of gossip, (Uncle Bing never wore his toupee outdoors when he didn't want to be recognised, while Bob Hope his "Road" movies co-star, very rarely took a vacation). Okay so maybe they're not earth shattering revelations but even I didn't know that Bing Crosby was as bald as a coot when he smooched with Grace Kelly in *High Society*!

There were so many highlights in this show that I struggled to whittle it down to one overall favourite. Randy's piano playing wasn't just impeccable it was mesmerising, with a solo effort that segued from blues into rock via jazz and pop. There were classics like "New York, New York" sung without the benefit of Nelson Riddle's iconic big band arrangement, but ably adapted nonetheless: then there were the duets with Howard and Gwen's rousing version of "You Raise Me Up", generating the lengthiest applause. This was class, pure and simple!

Musicians of Bing Crosby's calibre are a once in a lifetime phenomenon and we should make the most of them when they're alive. It's taken me over thirty years to realise that although I couldn't have wished for a better way of making the discovery. It's nice to know the "Old Groaner's" legacy is alive and well in the capable hands of his talented nephew.

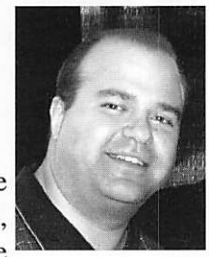
If you would like to know more about the mayor's charities or if you wish to donate contact:

Cheryl D'Cruz
Surrey Heath Mayor's Charity Co-Ordinator
cdcruz100@gmail.com

(Editor: One of our members - Gwen Harvey - was there and whilst she enjoyed Howard's turn I think she found the first act a bit long. Mind you she is a rabid Bing fan and was probably impatient waiting for the Crosby songs. I mentioned this to Howard and he replied as follows:

"We have done the show about 8 or 9 times around the Pacific Northwest, and we have found it goes over better if we don't bill it as a "Bing" show. Nobody really wants to see the great man's nephew try to imitate him....which I couldn't do even if I wanted to. But on the other hand, you can be sure that I make sure the audience gets a good dose of his songs, and a lesson in his place in the pantheon of 20th century singers!")

Let's Take It From the Top



Greg Van Beek returns to the story of the oldest fan club in the world.

Continuing on with our look back at the history of Club Crosby, we enter the 1970's. The May, 1971 issue of BINGANG celebrated, albeit a bit prematurely, Bing's 50 years in show business. With this issue, the new active president and editor is Priscilla J. Koernig, while the new active vice-president is Patricia E. Sullivan. Dues were $2.00 per year stateside, $2.50 for foreign members. Honorary members now include all of Bing's seven children, along with wife Kathryn. Larry Crosby writes with congratulations to the new president, and offers that "It is difficult for me to give you advance dope on Bing's doings, because he seldom gives us a schedule. He just goes ahead without my permission, and I must catch up."

The December 1971 issue deals with the death of Bing's long-time friend and frequent collaborator, Louis Armstrong. Pat Sullivan has a nice tribute article to the great Satchmo, and there's a transcript of their final appearance together on the David Frost Show in February of that year. The issue also features a review of Bing's latest album, "A Time to Be Jolly". The Australian representative is Shirley Naylor, while the British representative is Frank Murphy.

Moving ahead to the December 1972 issue, we see talented artist and member Joe Sinnott providing the first of what would be many wonderful covers for BINGANG. There is now a mid-west chapter of Club Crosby, handled by Kenneth Gray. The issue also features a not-too-glowing review of Bing's new album "Bing 'n Basie". The consensus seems to be that Bing's voice has lost its range, and as one particularly scathing review suggested, "A true pro should know when to give the game away."

December 1973 saw a great Joe Sinnott rendering of Bing and Joe Venuti on the cover, with an exclusive BINGANG interview of Mr. Venuti from member Bill Osborn. Bing writes to president Pat Sullivan on July 6, 1973, suggesting collectors Bob Roberts and Vernon Wesley Taylor are the 'greatest sources of material and data', and even goes so far as to supply Mr. Taylor's address! Bing also mentions his new disc of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon", and promises to have his secretary look around for photographs that would be useful for BINGANG.

The June, 1974 issue deals with Bing's hospitalization and lung surgery in January of that year, along with the passing of his brother Ted Crosby on December 19, 1973. BINGANG now includes a newsletter in each issue from the Mid-West Chapter of Club Crosby.

With the December 1974 issue, dues are now up to $3.00 per year, and the exciting news is just starting to trickle in about Bing's planned recordings in England for February 1975. On the Editor's page, it is noted that member F. B. Wiggins now has the distinction of having the club's most exotic address—Valletta, Malta! The club offers best wishes to him on his new post. On July 11, 1974, Larry Crosby writes to "All Club Officials" that "Bing is going to work again!" promoting his forthcoming CBS-TV special that aired on October 9th. An account of the August taping of this program is

covered by Pat Sullivan. As Bing wrote to Ms. Sullivan on September 12, 1974; "You know, of course, that both Larry and I are grateful for all of the things you've done for us in connection with the publication of the semi-annual journal, and I appreciate that it is indeed a chore that involves a great deal of work, and time, and effort." Also covered is Bing's September visit to Spokane and Gonzaga University.

March 1975 sees dues now at $4.00 per year, justified by the increased size of the magazines with the exciting new developments in Bing's career. This issue deals heavily on the 34th Crosby Pro-Am, and features an exclusive interview with Bing from the tournament for BINGANG readers. Bing discusses his planned British recording activities for the following month, and describes arranger Pete Moore as "sort of semi-modern and very advanced, very progressive type of arranger and conductor."

For the issue of BINGANG dated September 1975, Leslie Gaylor details at length Bing's recording work in Britain during February of that year. There's even a letter to president Pat Sullivan, dated July 9, 1975, from composer Harry Tobias, mentioning that "Bing recorded six of my songs; - "At Your Command", "I'm Gonna Get You", "I'm Sorry Dear", "Miss You", "Sweet and Lovely", and "Sail Along Silv'ry Moon", along with listing the songs of his late brother Charles that Bing recorded over the years. Long-time member Al Sutton details a number of songs, both old and new, that mention Bing or refer to him in the lyrics.

Pat Sullivan (left) and Priscilla Koernig interview Bing at Pebble Beach in January 1976.

March 1976 marks Club Crosby's 40th anniversary, in conjunction with Bing's 50th anniversary in show business. President Sullivan and VP Koernig conduct another exclusive BINGANG interview with Bing at his January 1976 Pro-Am in Pebble Beach.

Pat mentions that during the annual Laguna Honda Christmas performance in December, 1975, Bing inadvertently has a slip up in the lyrics of his most famous song, singing "and children listen to hear raindrops in the snow," instead of sleigh bells! Also mentioned are the four songs Bing cut in Los Angeles in January 1976 'At My Time of Life', 'Children', 'The Only Way to Go' and 'Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year'. With regards to 'At My Time of Life', Bing said; "It's a wonderful, ruminative type of song for a man in my age to be singing—it looks to me like it could very well become a standard—it's good—it has a chance." 'Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year' is mentioned to be a part of "a new LP on the 4 seasons which Bing will cut in London this spring." More possible titles for the album include 'Paris in the Spring', 'September in the Rain', and 'Winter Wonderland'. As we now know, "Seasons" wasn't cut until September of 1977, and included none of those possible songs. The big club news is that "Club Crosby will hold its first club meeting in August of this year."

In a letter to Priscilla dated September 26, 1975, Bing writes; "I'm glad you liked the album (That's What Life Is All About) when you finally got to listen to it. As you say, there are some very nice songs. My favorite is "Send in the Clowns" - a song which probably never will become popular because I don't think anybody understands the lyrics. It's a situation song that fits the play - the storyline of the play - but as a popular item, I don't think it has much chance, but I like the song and I like the record." Bing goes on to say; "The latest Journal, I thought, was very well done. Some nice things included. A lot of good information and some interesting articles by different people." Vern Wesley Taylor also details a visit to Bing at his home in Hillsborough with John Salisbury in this issue, along with long-time member Arne Fogel contributing his first BINGANG article on enjoying both Bing and Rock 'n Roll. Last, but by no means least, the passing of John Scott Trotter is acknowledged.

The September 1976 issue is the "official" 50th anniversary issue for Bing's recording career, 1926-76. Joe Sinnott created one of his most striking covers, with a solid black background and two images of Bing, one from his early years, and one from a 1976 concert appearance. It is also the "official" 40th anniversary issue of BINGANG. As Pat Sullivan writes; "Club Crosby warmly congratulates Bing on his 50 year anniversary and expresses appreciation for being privileged to be the vanguard of the audience for such a long, diversified and distinguished career. We'll never stop listening." A couple of planned television projects are mentioned, namely a Bing Crosby special "in late October with Carol Burnett as guest. He will tentatively also be guesting on Carol's show in late September." Neither of which transpired. News that Larry Kiner has special arrangements with Bing which permits the release of

radio material is noted, and thus begins the SPOKANE label series of LP's, which eventually numbers 32 albums.

This issue also contains reviews of Bing's first fully fledged concert appearance at the Music Center in Los Angeles on March 17, 1976, as well as similarly glowing reviews for the first London Palladium stint in June / July 1976.

The flurry of Bing's appearances, recordings, and television work continue in the March 1977 issue. From the concert stint on Broadway in December 1976, to the 36th Crosby Pro-Am in Pebble Beach—the last Bing would attend, to coverage of the first Club Crosby meeting in San Mateo, CA in August 1976 (covered by Hobie Wilson), there was a LOT packed into this issue. The activity, though somewhat slowed by Bing's fall and subsequent recuperation in March, continued on in the August 1977 issue. In a letter to Priscilla dated April 22, 1977, Bing writes; "I think the "Feels Good" album is the best I've done. In addition to the songs you mention, I like "The Night Is Young and You're So Beautiful". It has always been one of my favorite old songs. The accident at Pasadena was a ridiculous affair. There should have been some protection. The stage was constructed so part of it went up and down to the basement to bring different bands up and performers. The show had been finished, and I took my bows, thanked the audience, and turned to make exit stage right into the wings and stepped into space. Bad as it is, I could have been killed quite easily. I'm recuperating now. It's going to take a couple of months before anyone knows whether or not an operation is going to be necessary. The surgeons in charge seem to think I have a very good chance of eluding surgery. I hope they're right!" Also with the March, 1977 issue, George Reillo becomes East Coast Representative.

In a newspaper article from the Daily Sun-Reporter, dated February 19-20, 1977, Bing tells interviewer Bari Stone that; "Now there are so many talented singers. One of the best today is Barry Manilow, who sings beautifully and does some good quality music. Barbra Streisand is also marvelous, there has never been a voice like that in pop music," Crosby added.

The highlight of the September 1977 issue is the article "Bing Talks To Club Crosby". This was an interview conducted by the club, using questions to Bing submitted by club members. Bing discusses, among other things, the "Road to Tomorrow" film with Bob Hope, but, as Bing said "nothing is definite", and talks about Joe Venuti, who was suggested by members as being one artist they'd most like to have Bing paired with for an album. Bing cites Al Jolson as having "always been my favorite performer", along with mentioning his dislike for recording to a track ("you never have the opportunity to set the tempo, and you're locked into the tempo that's recorded by the orchestra before you get to the song itself."). Bing suggests he'd like to do a country-western album in Nashville, and that he has "no recollection whatsoever of a Reprise album called "Bing, Dino and Dixie."

Pat Sullivan's final question to Bing had to do with Club Crosby. She asks; "What do you think the role of a fan club or collector's club should be?" Bing responds;

> "Regarding the function of the club, I think what you and Priscilla and the others do fulfills the functions adequately. I know it's very important to any artist to have supporters who are interested in what they've done. Surely the preservation of all the material would be a very worthwhile project, and if anybody wants to undertake it, the office, I'm sure, would back the effort. Everything you do is appreciated, even though you don't hear from us as often as you might like. Warmest regards to you all."

The issue concludes with reviews of what turned out to be Bing's final US concert, in Concord, California on August 16, 1977 — the day Elvis Presley died. Also with the September, 1977 issue, Alston Sutton was named Publicity Officer, and George McCabe became midwest representative.

Joe Sinnott's cover for the January 1978 memorial edition.

A memorial issue of BINGANG, twice the normal number of pages, was issued in January of 1978. The first few pages dealt with Bing's final concert in Brighton, England, four days before his death, and the rest of the magazine contained coverage of his passing,

which made headlines around the globe. In addition to the actual coverage of the tragic event, there were countless editorials and tributes to Bing from newspapers around the country. Coupled with these were reviews of Bing's final TV special, "Bing Crosby's Merrie Olde Christmas", which aired six weeks after his death. It was uniformly praised by all, with many citing it as his best work on TV in years. The only fault they could find with the show had nothing to do with Bing ... it was David Bowie's solo of "Heroes" that was inserted as a music video, undoubtedly without Bing's knowledge. This issue remains the most collectible of all the many issues of BINGANG over the years.

The September 1978 issue covered Bing's last recording sessions for "Seasons", and contains a handwritten letter from Bing's 'right hand man' Leo Lynn to president Pat Sullivan. It also contains a 5 page listing of books, magazines, and magazine articles devoted to Bing and his passing. It also covers another passing, that of jazz violinist Joe Venuti. Dues are now $6.50. The October 1979 issue marked the final BINGANG cover created by Joe Sinnott.

The next issue, March 1980, saw Alston Sutton as president and editor, and Herbert Bootman as vice-president. Morton Miller was secretary-treasurer. Dues are now $8.00 per year. Priscilla Koernig was involved with Club Crosby since 1970, becoming vice-president in 1971, then president that same year, and then back to vice-president from 1973-79. With the October 1980 issue, Morton Miller is now vice-president and treasurer following the passing of Herb Bootman.

At this point, with the embarrassment of riches in having so many interesting and informative articles chronicling various aspects of Bing's work and career, rather than trying to pick and choose which merit mention, I'll just share the various changes in the Club Crosby management team.

In October 1982, Merril Willsohn takes over as secretary-treasurer, with Alston Sutton and Morton Miller remaining as president and vice president respectively. Club Crosby celebrated its demi-centennial with the winter, 1985 issue. With the August, 1987 issue, the club once again was under new management. Mark Scrimger became president, while Wayne Martin became vice-president and editor. Merril Willsohn remained as treasurer. With the July, 1988 issue, Merril retired, leaving Wayne Martin to act as VP, editor, and treasurer.

It was also in this issue that yours truly made his first appearance in a Bing Crosby fan club publication, in the form of a letter to the editor. It was the start of a long, wonderful collaboration and friendship with Wayne Martin. My first full-fledged article for BINGANG appeared in the June 1989 issue, and I was involved in one form or another, for better or for worse, with each issue of BINGANG from then on until its merger with the International Crosby Circle in 2003. With the winter 1996-97 issue, the 60th anniversary of Club Crosby, Charles Baillie, Peter Cakanic, David Lobosco and myself were appointed as contributing editors.

Joe Sinnott's cover from the January 1978 memorial edition of BINGANG was reproduced for the cover of the Summer 1997 issue, marking the 20th anniversary of Bing's passing, and Joe's first BINGANG cover in 18 years. With this same issue, Dieter B. Pressler became associate editor. For the winter 2000-2001 issue, Kathryn Crosby became our honorary president, and with the 65th anniversary's summer 2001 issue, Crissi Newton became the club secretary. It was at this time that a committee was chosen to study and decide on the procedure for the change of club officers in 2003. Members of the committee included Mark Scrimger, Wayne Martin, Charlie Baillie, Pete Cakanic, David Lobosco, myself, Dieter Pressler, Crissi Newton, Ken Crossland, Priscilla Koernig, Malcolm Macfarlane, and F. B. Wiggins.

By the time of the winter 2001-02 issue, the committee had decided that merging with the International Crosby Circle would be the best course of action, with the following stipulations: 1.) That Club Crosby should remain and become the International Club Crosby, thus retaining the world's oldest fan club status and ICC initials. 2.) The International Crosby Circle name would cease to be used. 3.) The club magazine title should be BING, with a truly international flavor and within the pages of the new magazine a balance of the best of BINGANG and BING would be sought. 4.) That a team of officers should be appointed to reflect a balance of membership, and new titles should be considered.

The committee approved the merger with the summer 2002 issue because we felt that the most important consideration here was what it could do for Bing Crosby's image in the public's eye. Would one larger, stronger organization have more impact and influence on the public than two smaller ones? We thought so, and that is why we voted for it. And thus, the final issue of BINGANG was issued in September 2003.

Greg Van Beek

The British Connection

Greg suggested that your editor ought to give some background about the International Crosby Circle as it was called before the merger with Club Crosby for the benefit of newer members.

Well, think back to 1950 in the UK. The Labour party had just won a general election with a 5 seat majority, Sir Harry Lauder died and record fans listened to their music on 78s. Customs officers seized smuggled nylon stockings with a black market value of £80,000, petrol rationing ended in May and the English football team lost 1 - 0 to the USA in the World Cup in Brazil.

But more important matters were afoot; the British Bing Club was launched in March 1950.

There had been UK based Bing clubs before but the club set up in 1950 was originally the brainchild of several Crosby admirers, including Jean Rainey who is still one of our members. Geoff Milne, who is heavily involved in the Sepia CD series today, was also one of the founder members and in 1952 he became a joint editor of the club's magazine which was called *Crosbyana.*

The late lamented Ralph Harding was contributing all manner of articles, some under pseudonyms, because of a shortage of material. Membership stood at 110 by the end of 1952.

Spring 1953 brought a surprise to the members as they discovered that their club was now called *The Crosby Society* as it was felt that the club's initials of BBC might cause confusion with another organisation. The name of the magazine was changed to *Crosby Post.* In 1954, financial problems had almost put the club out of existence but it was relaunched in November 1954 as *The British Crosby Society* and its magazine remained as *Crosby Post.*

Frank Murphy had become Vice-President by 1955 and to give an example of his enthusiasm, he organised a raffle by post to raise funds for the club. Tickets were 1/- each and the first prize was a private issue Bing LP. By 1957 Frank was Active Co-President with Dorothy Hardiman and the club had acquired an Irish branch whose secretary was Johnny Hopkins. Bill Taylor was the 'Discologist' and Stan White (yes, he was working hard for the cause even then) was the 'General Affairs Officer'. Publicity Officer was Ted Laker and the American Correspondent was Pat Sullivan.

In 1957 the dream of a complete discography of Bing's records was launched by the club for the first time and this was to be the now much sought after 'The Road to Bing Crosby' in which Derek Parkes, Fred Reynolds, Bob Roberts, Reg Davis, Geoff Milne, Charles Cowdry, Leslie Gaylor, Les Phythian and Ralph Harding played major parts.

Frank ran what was very much a 'fan club' where negative comment was almost unheard of and this produced divisions as the years went by. But Frank's tremendous energy and enthusiasm ensured a reasonably successful club and membership rose to around 200. By 1960, the magazine was being issued every two months with Frank and Tony Carpenter sharing the editorial duties.

There was a major shock in the September 1965 edition of *Crosby Post* as Frank announced that he would be resigning from the British Crosby Society to form a new club called the International Crosby Circle. Ralph Harding was to be the new Editor of *Crosby Post.* The ICC was to run separately from the British Crosby Society and to have a team of correspondents in as many countries as possible. However this started off an almighty row which went on for many months until the various parties made it up. The outcome was that the British Crosby Society was 'enfolded' into the ICC and a separate and ultimately very successful magazine called *The Crosby Collector* was published by Ralph Harding for the next six years. Frank continued as Editor of the club magazine which he christened BING magazine.

Frank meets up with Bing and Kathryn at Cockermouth in 1966.

In those days, the magazine was typed out on stencils which were then duplicated. Frank had many talents but typing and spelling were not amongst them and there were many hilarious typos which were highlighted in a superb article by Fred Reynolds called 'To Frid from Frunk' which we have reprinted on several occasions, the last time being in BING #145. Frank remained in the Editor's chair until 1971 when he was succeeded by John Bassett. John brought his expertise as a printer to the layout of the magazine and he played a major part in the discographies produced in the 1970s. He worked closely during this period with the club's secretary, Reg Bristo, who eventually took over as Editor in 1975.

Ah.... Bristo!

Reg had firm opinions on most subjects and his enthusiasm leapt from the pages of the magazine. He was Editor from 1975 to 1989 and he presided over the exciting years of 1975 to 1977 when Bing was so active. Whilst Les Gaylor and Bert Bishop contributed to the magazine in handsome measure, Reg wrote most of the rest of the contents. He duplicated the magazine (which was published at quarterly intervals), posted it, acted as Secretary and Treasurer as well as issuing club cassettes to raise funds. Looking back now, it is difficult to know

how he did it. Membership increased dramatically in the first few years he was in the chair because of Bing's higher profile and for the first time, the club managed to have its details put on Bing's LPs. Reg was described in an excellent appreciation by Fred Reynolds in BING #94 which included the words:

"His editorial policy, if undefined, has been consistent and forceful and no one could deny its individual tone with a style that opted for quantity and a comfortable prejudice."

We all knew where we stood with Reg and what he stood for. He carried the weight of the club for almost fifteen years until ill health caused him to hand over the reins in 1989. It was Michael Crampton who hurried down to South Wales to help get BING #92 issued and we all read of Reg's resignation. He was to be dead before the end of the year.

The Management Team

BING #92 reached us in late summer 1989 and the way forward was discussed at the Leeds meeting in October. Michael Crampton drew five of us together for a separate meeting and the 'famous five' were Ken Crossland, Michael Crampton, John Joyce, Keith Parkinson and me. We all agreed that no one person could take over from Reg and the only solution was to share out the jobs and bring in others to help us. Ken Crossland became Editor, I was his Assistant, John Joyce was to be publisher / distributor and Michael became Secretary / Treasurer. Support was to be obtained from Keith Parkinson, Lionel Pairpoint, Leslie Gaylor, Derek Parkes, Fred Reynolds and Ron Bosley. Slowly we started to put it all together and in our first edition, BING #93 published in December 1989, Ken Crossland laid down some guiding principles which we still follow to this day. They were (and are):

1. The magazine is intended to cater for all who enjoy Bing - from the collector to the connoisseur to the critic to the casual fan.

2. The pages of the magazine will be open to anyone with something to contribute to the memory and reputation of Bing.

3. The magazine will not be given over to criticising other singers and other types of music. We would not wish it to be done to 'us' and we will not therefore do it to 'them'.

4. The magazine is yours. Other than in the Editorial column, you will not find a commentary by the editor running through the journal. Nor indeed will find the editor writing the journal for you. You must subscribe and support by giving us your views, your articles and anything else you can offer.

****

I took over as editor from Ken Crossland in 1993 and so we continued until the early noughties when we merged with the oldest fan club in the world!

Malcolm Macfarlane

NOTE: A more detailed history of the British arm can be found on the BING magazine web site and I apologise in advance to all those hard working contributors whose names I have had to omit because of space considerations.

And of course we must not forget the Irish, Canadian and Australian branches as well. Go to the inside back cover to see what Gord Akinson was up to in Canada in 1948.

ON THE DOWN BEAT

As Greg mentioned in the last issue, a 1937 copy of BINGANG magazine contained a review of two of Bing's recent Kraft Music Hall shows. The unnamed reviewer had an unusual style to say the least but read on!

Thursday, November 4, 1937

Unfortunately, the two programs I chose to cover ended up by covering me, and that, deahs, is some feat! Tell me, what does England do to respectable Yanks and what do the States do to respectable Britishers - Welshmen, to be exact? Yanks cross the Big Pond thatta way, and return with–er, weird tales, and Britishers cross the other way and emerge as punsters. The wounds engendered by young Doug Fairbanks and Ray Milland will stay always, I suppose, so it won't hurt to re-relate the Cause and Effect.

The night of November 4th, Crosby chose that whimsical little morsel of beseechment "Stop, You're Breaking My Heart" as his first, with J. S. Trotter and his effulgent Eighteen doing the stopping and breaking. It was then Doug's turn, and whatta turn! In the first place, the customary Fairbanks what-ho seemed completely absent; upon prodding (not too much) Doug spun a redundant, much-embellished tale (which Bing later docked "Turmoil in the Tyrol') - with not too much scrupulosity. Anyway, we scrambled up and down Alps, and after we were all drinking the pure, clear air, and several pauses on the brink of eternity and infernity had been paused, (and we were wondering what in heck was Fairbanks working to forget) it was revealed that one Crosby had been heard echoing "Sweet Leilani' from the porch of a chalet - Doug gave one cry for "alp" then collapsed. Apparently his recovery came about swiftly, for we delved into the peerage of The Boss, and we shall delve out just as swiftly, and not 'hang around' it. When Doug moved on down to Lake Constance, it should have been Como, with a period supplied! Doug's punt upset, he was drowning, Crosby was nowhere near (nowhere on Decca?) suspense, drama, he's so young to die, but - ulp - his head started "swimming" and carried him, to shore. It was darned near the punitentiary for Mr. Fairbanks, but he begged off to hear Giovanni Cologna sing - Mr. C. being the Toast of Europe - well, we were "burned" when the Toast turned out not for "butter' but for worse!

Stanza Number Four of the Bazooka Suite introduced Robin after The Boss had eased the Fairbanks situation just a little with "I Still Love to Kiss You Goodnight". Bob then, his woes over an inartistic family, and covert confusion over the lung power of Cousin Corneda who blew dust from a painting with such gusto (dusto) that she set the windmill in motion - and Granmaw Snelson who knit iron fences with a crowbar in each hand. Purl without price!

Bing welcomes Bob Burns to the show.

1915's musical "contrib'" was: "When You Wore a Tulip", corsaged by Bing, then Ken Carpenter and the usual bewildering antics to excuse the half-way chimes which always occur at this time.

Fay Bainter's turn next; our surprise and yours to find her just as stationhouse and gracious as you please. Her touching tolerance of the cinema's inadequacy, unquote, is confined to disliking said tolerance in other membahs of the stage, for which we give three cheers and pass not too lightly over to "The Folks Who Live on the Hill" by Bing. At this point, you weren't the only ones who ran to the door expecting to see kitty entering; it was Giovanni Whosis, starting into "You're My Everything". Those of us who were still alive then heard him recite a poem consisting of scrambled eggs served verbally with "Drip, Drip, Drip" and "In less Than Twenty Minutes" tacked on the end. Well, as Jerry said "great hoax from little acorns grow" but he should have treed again. "Night and Day" by the ork and "Ebb Tide" a sweet and silvery forecast of Ray Milland's appearance, artistically suspirated by Bing darkened the Hall.

(Editor: Just in case you are a bit confused after reading this, this is what Lionel Pairpoint's radio book says about the show. The asterisks indicate a song by Bing.)

No. 78 4th November 1937

With Ken Carpenter, Bob Burns, The Paul Taylor Choristers, Giovanni Colonna, Fay Bainter and Douglas Fairbanks Jr.

*Stop! You're Breaking My Heart	
*I Still Love to Kiss You Goodnight	
*When You Wore a Tulip	(a)
*The Folks Who Live on the Hill	(b)
You're My Everything	Giovanni Colonna
Night and Day	John Scott Trotter Orchestra
*Ebb Tide	

Notes:

(a) Deja Vu DVRECD (CD) - "The Bing Crosby Story"
Interfusion CD D26291 "A Bing Crosby Cavalcade Of Song"
CD- JSP 934A – "Bing Crosby – The Vintage Years 1932-1937"

(b) Deja Vu DVRECD (CD) - "The Bing Crosby Story"
CD- JSP 934A – "Bing Crosby – The Vintage Years 1932-1937"

"KPO at 7 pm brings Doctor Bingus Crosby, the eminent musician and a guest list including Douglas Fairbanks Jr, Fay Bainter and a tenor named, Giovanni Colonna. We've not heard of Mr. Colonna, either and a rummaging through the files reveals that he is a Crosby discovery. Seems Doctor Bing heard him singing at Gonzaga University, a couple of weeks ago and immediately signed him, probably demonstrating that the great groaner is seriously accepting his new role as a Doctor of Music (sic). It is also being bruited about that Doctor Crosby, taking a tip from Rudy Vallee and Eddie Cantor, is about to dabble heavily in this discovery business and future Music Halls will, doubtless bring us all manner of rank unknowns."

("San Francisco Chronicle" 4th November 1937)

Thursday, November 11, 1937

This night, Bing turned from suspirating to susurrating, and did the switching on "That Old Feeling" after which the Kraft Kindergarten opened with no hint of the disaster to follow by Bing's leading Ray Milland to the microphone.... Ray had hopped down from Palm Springs where he's encoring with Dottie Lamour on a jungle opus, and perhaps it was the rush that got him. Anyway, there was that barroom atmosphere with everyone pushing around to get their pun in, "the malt the merrier" "ales well that ends well" and "can't beer it". As mother and I rushed upstairs into the punthouse, mother was heard to murmur, "Milland sakes alive"! She kept right on murmuring when bets were laid about Bing nevaire singing a song based on the gentle art of tipping a glass not filled with milk, and of course, Bing led with his chin and let Ray sing (?) "Where the Brewery Night" with Boo-Bed-Booze! (no De-Boo-zy?) A game next, taught by The Master Kraftsman and Robin to Ray, of course, Ray caught on and proceeded to sling the game into Bing's and Bob's faces ... name a word and give a synonymic city... endeavour upped up as Troy, well, you know. After everyone stealing everyone else's punder, I expected Ray to fade-out with "Give me ad-liberty or

give me death" and Bing to sing "Through Liquortesy of Love" but Ray had to immediately return to Palm Springs and Bing reiterated "If It's the Last Thing I Do". Strange they overlooked the possibilities of Dniepropetrovsk in Russia, don't Genoa!

"Fantasy" meeting you here introduced us to a Foray into the Future where we met Robin and the Bazooka giving THE Gabriel competition. Authoritative information on how the Burns kin won the Great War, Uncle Fudd's disgrace, and Gran'paw Snazzy's postal card, which, when it was forcibly confiscated by Gran'maw, evoked a comment "How I Hate to Lose You" berzerked by Bob. What was the crack about the gravel in the berzerka backfiring and neatly removing Robin's entire front rack?

We'll skip the school session which disposed of the half-way bell, and mention 1918 only as Bing's "I Don't Want to Get Well" song. Olympe Bradna gave us the highlights of a brief but determined career, then her act of cunning canines, both canines suspiciously baritone, and one eventually doing that canine trick-howling at the lunar lady "The Moon Got in My Eyes".

Rosa Tentoni, born in the States and a lyric soprano who is really lyric rather than a lady with a high voice going higher, sang 'Musette's waltz' from Boheme, a Neapolitan Tarantella which Bing dubbed the Italian - Gypsy Big Apple and after which Bob suggestively murmured "Weenie - Weenie - Weenie" and then an 'American Lullaby'. We hear of the relief in general that Bing isn't going to go into opera, then in "The One Rose" he sounds good enough to be in a dozen operas.

But d'you suppose Ray is really like that?

(Editor: Here's Lionel's information for comparison purposes.)

No. 79 11th November 1937

With Ken Carpenter, Bob Burns, Olympe Bradna, Rosa Tentoni and Ray Milland.

*That Old Feeling	
*If It's the Last Thing I Do	(a)
*I Don't Want to Get Well	(a)
*The Moon Got in My Eyes	(a)
Musette's Waltz	Rosa Tentoni
*The One Rose (That's Left in My Heart)	

Note:

(a) Deja Vu DVRECD (CD) - "The Bing Crosby Story"
CD - JSP 934A – "Bing Crosby – The Vintage Years 1932-1937"

"Bing Crosby, Bob Burns and company didn't have lustrously shining guests on Kraft Phoenix, last Thursday but the regulars on the show were definitely 'up to snuff' and snuff from a jewel-decked box. Ray Milland and Olympe Bradna from films were up for two-way quizzing from Bing and Bobby. The continuity carvers for the show took fine care of the Messrs. B but overlooked the one-shotters. There was a faulty note too, when after Crosby repeatedly referred to Miss Bradna by her first name, in advance build up, she marched up to the mike and announced he'd mispronounced her name - An overwhelmingly large slice of the public does too! Later, Bing's pronunciation faltered again during the last few times he addressed her. Third guest was Rosa Tentoni, San Francisco opera oriole who was on near the conclusion and did OK with several selections. Crosby's patter and Burns' bumbling were particularly bright when the twain were twitting each other and one schoolroom farce that the boys did was as aces as anything the Kraft show has offered in a long time, if not ever before. JST's 18 piece orchestra was in the groove, all the way."
("Variety" 17th November 1937)

Bing and Dutch: A Reagan Centennial Overview

Ronald Reagan was born on February 6, 1911 and to celebrate his centenary Martin McQuade looks back on his interactions with Bing.

"I like to swim, hike and sleep. (eight hours a night.) I'm fairly good at every sport except tennis, which I just don't like. My favorite menu is steak smothered in onions and strawberry shortcake. Mr. Norm is my alias. I play bridge adequately, collect guns, always carry a penny as a good luck charm and knock wood when I make a boast or make a wish. I have a so–so convertible coupe which I drive myself. I'm interested in politics and governmental problems. My favorite books are Turnabout by Thorne Smith, Babbitt, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and the works of Pearl Buck, H. G. Wells, Damon Runyon, and Erich Remarque. I'm a fan of Bing Crosby. My favorite actress is my wife. I like things colored green and my favorite flower is the Eastern Lilac. I love my baby, wife, and home. I've just built a new one – home, I mean. Nothing about me to make me stand out on the midway."

This passage appeared in an article entitled "How to Make Yourself Important," written for *Photoplay Magazine*, by then Army Air Force Second Lieutenant Ronald Reagan, nicknamed "Dutch." Published in August, 1942 during a temporary leave from active duty, this early example of Reagan-the-scribe reveals a homespun patchwork worthy, in its self-effacement, of Bing himself. Reagan had recently appeared with Bing, Mary Martin and announcer Ken Carpenter on the April 16th, 1942 broadcast of *The Kraft Music Hall,* "short - waved to fighting men... at every strategic center of the globe." This was the first of many intersections in two fabulous, parallel lives. On that date this exchange took place.

BC: "Ronald Reagan, [pronounced "Regan"] recently awarded star billing for his fine work in the Warner Brothers picture *Kings Row,* is also soon to be seen in something called *Juke Girl.* These, with a picture called *Desperate Journey*, will probably windup Reagan's film career pro tem because on April 19th Ronald Reagan joins the United States

Armed Forces. Just what branch of the service are you going into, Ronnie?"

RR: "Well, after five years in the reserve, Bing, I'm receiving a commission in the cavalry."

M M: "Oh, that's wonderful. You know, I think they should give every man in the army a commission."

R R: "How could they give every man in the army a commission?"

M M: "Oh, it wouldn't have to be much. Just a little something – say, thirty cents a Jap."

R R: "Too many men willing to do it for free!"

B C: "With you being an ex-radio announcer in Big Ten football circles ought to qualify you for a spot, say, like an observer in the Air Corps, huh?"

R R: "Well; it's been over four years since I've been behind a sports announcer's mike, Bing."

M M: "Isn't that just like radio – wasting a fine actor like you doing silly old sports broadcasts, when they could have used you in those daytime serials."

B C: "Yeah, it would've been happy casting, too. Ronald Reagan's capable characterization of one of those happy-go-lucky, misunderstood good citizens would fit admirably into anyone of the exciting mid-morning matinees. Oh, in fancy's flight I could almost hear the announcer now saying:"

K C: "The makers of Vagabond Varnish – for walls, floors and pancakes – present the dreary drama *Heartbreak Hospice*, the true life story of 'Ronnie, Boy Exterminator.'"

This segues into a brief lampoon of the current vogue of hospital soap operas involving Ronnie, Mary as fiancé Marva, and Bing as Harvey, long-lost grocery boy. Reagan's early radio career must have held special interest for Bing, since both men enjoyed early broadcast experiences at fabled radio station KFWB in Los Angeles.

Soon after starring in 1943 in *This Is the Army*, Irving Berlin's very next film musical following *Holiday Inn*, (and a military flag-waving precursor *to White Christmas*) Lieutenant Reagan was ordered in January, 1944 to New York on temporary duty to assist with the Fourth War Loan Drive held by the United States Treasury Department. To help launch the drive, Reagan and Bing participated in *Let's All Back the Attack*, an hour long program broadcast on January 17, 1944 by NBC and heard on all four networks. Throughout, Reagan earnestly portrays "Everyman" Jimmy Jones, a battle-weary American soldier who for three days has been in a foxhole on a nameless embattled Pacific island. His "heart keeps asking questions." "Could this be me out here? What am I doing here? Yeah, I know there's a job to do, a job to do on those dirty... Oh, well, I'd like to know, are we doing it? Here I am, all alone. How can I know? Where is it coming from, all the help we need - all the guns and all the planes and all the tanks?"

In response, special guest Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. provides testimonials of the valiant efforts underway to win the war and depictions of the liberty flourishing on the home front. Jones is uplifted. "Sure makes you feel that you can lick the world when you hear that kind of stuff. Take it from a soldier. That's the kind of world we're risking death to live in. Hey, how about this? Who'd have thought I'd ever wind up in the heavy thinking department? I'm the kid who thought at first he was fighting for baseball and hot dogs and records in a jukebox, and things like that."

Morgenthau replies, "You still are, Jimmy," and then ushers in Bing who sings "Candlelight and Wine," featuring a rare piano accompaniment of John Scott Trotter. (This rendition may have been used for *Command Performance* #104 of February 1st, 1944.) Bing then invites Trotter to "tippy-toe to the podium" to conduct a song for Ginny Simms. After her performance of 'Hallelujah" Bing passes the baton to Victor Young for John Charles Thomas's performance of "Homing." Bing ends this "jukebox" sampler by stating, "There you are, Private Jimmy Jones."

Jones, his despair shed and his morale restored, exclaims, "Gosh, that was wonderful, Mr. Secretary. Seems like I've got half of America in this foxhole with me; and the more of it that comes in, the less crowded it feels." The historic success of *Let's All Back the Attack* guaranteed that the shield in the poster campaign would become one of the most advertised and promoted trade marks during the war. On January 22, 1944, Morgenthau sent to now Captain Reagan a note of thanks, saying "This was the most effective program of its kind since the beginning of the war." Thirty eight years later, Henry Morgenthau III sent President Reagan a reminder of this day, which resulted in this reply, dated February 2, 1982. "Dear Mr. Morgenthau. Thank you very much for the photo you sent. I well remember that trip to New York for the bond drive. I hope you have received your copy. If not, it's on its way. My thanks and best regards, Ronald Reagan."

Until the war's end Reagan was assigned to the First Motion Picture Unit, supervising the production of scores of training and promotional films for The Army Air Force. In 1946 Reagan became Bing's union president upon his first election as president of the Screen Actors Guild. They may have crossed paths again when they were both granted clearance (along with Jimmy Stewart, Walt Disney, John Ford, and Howard Hawks, among others) to work on undisclosed projects at Lookout Mountain Laboratory, a top-secret Air Force research facility and cutting-edge movie studio in Laurel Canyon, California. In addition, they offered their services to Radio Free Europe, established in 1949 and funded by the United States Congress to promote the free flow of information behind The Iron Curtain. In 1950 RFE organized "Crusade for Freedom" campaigns to fight Communism, and both Reagan and

Bing were called upon by General Lucius D. Clay (hero of the Berlin Airlift) to rally support. In August, 1951 Reagan appeared in a film, *The Big Truth,* in which he thanked contributors to "The World Freedom Bell," described as a "symbol of hope and freedom;" and solicited donations to aid RFE stations to "pierce The Iron Curtain with the truth, answering the lies of The Kremlin." Outtakes, with footage shot in West Berlin, were used for a television appeal.

Bing appeared in a similar short subject for the 1951 -52 campaign, echoing the same commitment. "I want to tell you something I found out over in Europe. We've got plenty of good friends behind The Iron Curtain - probably fifty or sixty million of them. They're freedom-loving peoples in the captive nations, who refuse to believe the big Red lies the Communists tell them. And you know why they don't believe those lies? It is because we, yes, you and I, and millions of other private U.S. citizens found a way to pierce The Iron Curtain with the truth. And that way is Radio Free Europe, the most powerful weapon in the Crusade for Freedom." Reagan's path was set.

Bing also traveled that path as he appeared with his sons for RFE on an NBC radio program aired September 28, 1951 (and later re-broadcast for in-school listening) entitled *Youth Crusade with the Crosbys.* The theme was "What is life really like behind the Iron Curtain? What is being done and what can be done to fight Communism throughout the world?" Bing began by asking, "Are you willing to give up three pieces of bubble gum? Three cents will buy one brick for a new Radio Free Europe station to carry the truth behind The Iron Curtain." He urged his young audience to sign "The Freedom Scrolls," which had been distributed throughout the nation's schools, and to donate "truth dollars." "You know we're actually helping to prevent World War Three, but that takes dollars, truth dollars, all we can spare." To emphasize the message a young Czech boy was interviewed for the show. There were newspaper ads showing a photo of Bing and his boys signing a scroll in San Francisco, as well as a poster urging Americans to join the Crusade. This showed a man in front of a microphone which carried the word "Truth," – the same as that used by Reagan on his appeal. In 1956 Bing also contributed a personal appeal to a radio recording supervised by The Crusade's Advertising Council.

Reagan and "his favorite actress" Jane Wyman were divorced in 1949. She would subsequently co–star in two films with her self described "teenage crush": *Here Comes the Groom* and *Just for You.* (She had appeared, un-credited, as a chorus girl in *Anything Goes.*) Just prior to her re–marriage and under the name "Jane Wyman Reagan," she donated one hundred dollars to the Hope/Crosby - hosted Helsinki Olympics Telethon, which, on its broadcast date of June 21, 1952 became a Cold War cause c 1 bre.

A young Jane Wyman in 1940 on the day she and Ronald Reagan became engaged.

Of special interest is this reminiscence by Jean Westcott Marshall, best friend of MGM contract player, Nancy Davis, who became the second Mrs. Reagan. "We were all wrapped up in movie stars. I liked Ronald Reagan, and she liked Bing Crosby. She used to say, 'I don't see what you see in Ronald Reagan.'"

In the early fifties Reagan appeared in three Paramount releases with one of Bing's favorite leading ladies, Rhonda Fleming. Paramount executive producer and Reagan's close friend A. C. Lyles recalled seeing the two men interact on the lot. "They certainly had a mutual admiration for each other."

In 1951 Reagan appeared in print ads endorsing Chesterfield Cigarettes, thereby joining Bing as a pitchman for the company. By far Bing and Reagan's strongest corporate link would be General Electric. *GE Theater,* a host-less drama anthology program, had its television debut on CBS on Sunday, February 1, 1953. The series alternated weekly with *The Fred Waring Show* and was once pre-empted on January 3rd, 1954, when the first *Bing Crosby Show for General Electric* was televised. (There was a radio counterpart hosted by Ken Carpenter which aired from July 9 – Oct. 1, 1953. This served as summer replacement for Bing's radio series for GE.)

As the third TV season approached, this report appeared in the May 1st, 1954 issue of *Billboard Magazine.* "General Electric is readying an unprecedented budget, said to be close to four million dollars time and talent, for its new half-hour video stanza which will encompass twenty eight live and thirteen film outings…Ronald Reagan will act as host and also star in some of the dramas. Reagan also becomes 'Mr. General Electric,' a role the company tried hard to get Bing Crosby to play." Bing must have been a most appealing

candidate, having recently contributed a live performance of "White Christmas" for a celebration held by the company's Incandescent Lamp division at Nela Park in Cleveland, Ohio. This included a special wire in Hollywood enabling Bing to light the yuletide spectacle by remote control. History may have been considerably altered had he heeded GE's blandishments. Meanwhile, GE was competing with Bing Crosby Electronics in the development of color television and the video tape recorder. These experiments would impact Reagan as he began his eight seasons for GE on September 26th, 1954, less than four months after Bing concluded his two year tenure promoting the company's product. Reagan zealously took up that mantle, and also became roving spokesman as he forged invaluable contacts and fine-tuned and articulated his political views, never deviating from his crusade against Communism.

Hollywood had a well publicized collision with that doctrine when Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary General of The Soviet Union, accepted an invitation from Twentieth Century Fox to come to lunch on September 19, 1959 and to visit the set of *Can-Can*. There was a desperate scramble among the Tinsel town elite for position on the guest list. The New York Times announced, "One of the angriest social free-for-alls in the uninhibited and colorful history of Hollywood is in the making about who is to be at the luncheon." In the midst of this unprecedented demand for tickets, Bing and Reagan turned down their invitations in order to protest the dictator.

There were invitations which they would both accept; for instance to Peter Lind Hayes and Mary Healy's star-studded USO party on June 25, 1942; to Ronald Colman's surprise birthday party on February 9th, 1946; the wedding of Bob Hope's daughter Linda on January 11, 1969; and New Year's Eve celebrations at the estate of publisher Walter Annenberg. Both fraternized The Bohemian Club, golfed at The Bel Air Country Club; were members of Mzuri Wildlife Foundation; and cherished the rancher's life. Chasen's Restaurant in Hollywood was dear to their hearts. Bing once held a party for the Pittsburgh Pirates there. Reagan had his own private booth where he proposed to Nancy. This is on permanent exhibit at the Reagan Presidential Library. The two men had mutual friends, i.e. William Holden and Frank Sinatra, an ardent Democrat who, like Reagan, switched party loyalties; in Sinatra's case because President Kennedy canceled plans to stay at his Palm Springs home during Easter, 1962, visiting Bing's compound instead. Enraged by the snub, Sinatra became a staunch "Reaganite."

Reagan's tenure as president of the Screen Actors Guild witnessed a steady decline of the studio system. One more death knell was sounded in 1960 when, during his final term, the Guild demanded a percentage of the three to eight million dollars which the major studios would receive from TV, should they sell their vast catalogs of pre-1948 films. The major companies refused. Once negotiations failed, Reagan called a vote which led to a divisive industry-wide strike, the first of its kind. This paralyzed production, as witnessed by a report in the March 21, 1960 issue of *Life Magazine*. "With this foreboding sense of change in their minds, the film-makers left the strike-bound studios. The stars drove home upset but not too worried. The strike caught actors in strange situations – Jack Lemmon hanging from the yardarm of a ship and Bing Crosby as a fifty year old collegian." (A reference to *High Time*) Reagan was criticized for the eventual settlement, allowing actors residuals only for films made after 1961, a situation lamented by Bing as late as 1976 on *The Joe Franklin Show.*

On the *Hollywood Palace* of October 31, 1967 Bing told this joke. "I was walking through the airport on the way home and a fella hollered at me, 'Hey, Bing! When are you going to do like George Murphy and Ronald Reagan and Shirley Temple?' I said, 'What do you mean - Get into politics?' He said, 'No, Get out of show business.' I rallied from that but it took quite a while."

Once Reagan "got out of show business" to become Governor of California in 1967, he maintained a correspondence with Bing. Several letters have been generously shared by The Reagan Library. Some deal with mundane matters, but several are of interest. A letter from that inaugural year offers the Governor's gratitude to Bing for his work on behalf of the Commission of the Californias, and grants him a reappointment certificate. Another expresses appreciation for help given to the Governor's re-election in 1970.

A letter from the Governor to Kathryn dated October 30, 1970, details his personal involvement in improving the safety at an intersection in Redding, California where a car crash resulted in injuries to the Crosby children and the death of Kathryn's mother. A warm condolence is extended." Again, I would like to express my sorrow for all the unhappiness the accident has caused you. I hope the children have all recovered from the hurts and bruises and cracked ribs and are now back to giving you the normal childhood problems. I hope our paths will cross again soon. Meanwhile, all of my best to you and Bing."

A 1969 correspondence attempts to allay Bing's concerns regarding the environmental impact of the proposed Dos Rios Project on the Middle Fork of the Eel River. Upon learning about Bing's lung surgery in early 1974, Reagan wrote on January 17th, "Nancy and I have been deeply concerned and were relieved to learn of your successful operation. Have a speedy recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with you."

A memo dated February 25, 1974 indicates a "thank you" from Bing for Reagan's presentation to him of an award granted by the American Music Association. Also in 1974, Reagan made this intriguing reply to one Jimmy

Johnson, Jr. about a planned film based on Bing's life. "Being a Bing Crosby fan myself, I think you have a wonderful idea. Unfortunately, the many years I have been away from show business left me with almost no contacts…Be assured, however, if and when I should find myself in the company of the appropriate people, I will be glad to plant the seed for a Bing Crosby story on screen."

One of Bing's recordings had a personal meaning for Reagan, as relayed by this anecdote in Barbara Walters memoir, *Audition.* "Just before Thanksgiving of 1981 Ronald Reagan agreed to let me interview him…at his secluded ranch in the hills near Santa Barbara, California…There was a small lake on the property with a canoe called *True Love*, the name of the love song in the movie, *High Society.* The movie had starred Grace Kelly and Bing Crosby, both of whom Reagan knew well from his acting days." Actually named "Tru Luv," this had been a gift given to Nancy on March 4, 1977, the couple's twenty fifth wedding anniversary. They would often take out the canoe from their "Lake Lucky," which sounds like a place where Bing would have been at home.

Another Crosby classic is noteworthy in the Reagan annals. On February 25, 1981, Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher paid her first visit to The White House. Before dinner, Reagan made this toast. "It is widely known that I share many of your ideals and beliefs…I believe, however, that our relationship goes beyond cordiality and shared ideals…You are welcome here. We're delighted that you'd come."

The President and the Prime Minister are entertained by Bob Hope.

Thatcher offered an impromptu response. 'I thought as I heard that song, 'I'll be seeing you in all the old familiar places,' this is quite a nice, old familiar place in which to see you, Mr. President. And I hope we'll be able to sing that song for very, very many years."

By helping guide a hand across the sea, Bing had just won one for "The Gipper."

* My gratitude is given to Shelley Nayak, archivist at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, for securing the necessary clearance in order to share the letters referred to in this article. In appreciation, copies of the April 16th, 1942 broadcast of *Kraft Music Hall* as well as *Let's All Back the Attack* were donated to the Reagan Archive.

Bing for President?

On September 27th, 1960 Adlai Stevenson, making a campaign appearance on behalf of John Kennedy, made this remark. "I've been informed, while waiting in the wings, that there is a movie here in this theater of Bing Crosby's. [*High Time.*] I understand that he has yielded me his time. I think this is particularly just because I remember twelve years ago, when I was first in politics and on my way to my inauguration as Governor of Illinois that my son, John Fell, came rushing into my car and said, 'Give me ten autographs, quick!' And I said, 'Ten?' He said, 'Yes, I can trade them for one of Bing Crosby.' I'm afraid the rate of exchange hasn't improved very much." It is not well known that in 1952, when Stevenson received his first Democratic nominations for president, there had been a joke nomination, common in those days, for a Bing Crosby candidacy during the Republican convention in Chicago. Could this abortive "boomlet" still have been fresh in Stevenson's mind? In any event, Stevenson certainly knew the answer to this query once posed by Bing. *What do we do with a General when he stops being a general?*

Martin McQuade

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series of CDs remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $18.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $18.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £11 each.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has a supply of the book "Alternate Bing Crosby" by Colin Pugh which was published in 1988. Running to 159 pages, it gives details of the many alternate takes Bing made. If you would like a copy, send £3.50 to Michael Crampton. Europe and Ireland members should send £4.50. Also Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal figure. There are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances and Michael is offering these at the hugely discounted price of only £5.99 including postage.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD and video.

Brenda Cobley, tel: 07794 287 156. email: Brenda.cobley@ntlworld.com

Brenda is the daughter of the late Tony Heasman and she is having to undertake the sad task of disposing of his collection. Contact Brenda if you are interested in taking it on. Brenda is based in the UK.

John Marshall, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Middlesex TW11 OQD, UK

John offers PAL format DVDs as follows:

"The Best of the Dean Martin Show" in three volumes. Each 2-disc volume contains 8 hours of this long running highly rated TV show in colour with a cast list including just about anyone who was around in 1965-74, with a generous helping of Bing. £10 (incl. p & p) per 8 hour volume."

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619 [Tues/Wed & Fridays: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. only],
e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Free lists available by email. Ray Purslow has always been a real supporter of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs, please contact Ray.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for CDs imported from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia. (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights. In April, the Crosby film was *Anything Goes* (1956) supported by *The Bing Crosby Show* from May 14, 1962. In June, *Robin and the Seven Hoods* was shown together with the documentary *The Magic of Bing Crosby*. Other film nights planned for 2011 are on 16 August; 18 October and 6 December. The venue is Mamma Vittoria's, 343 Smith St. (1st floor), Fitzroy, Victoria.

Internet sites:

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains rare photos of Bing, radio shows, recordings and clips from Bing's films. The site has recently been relaunched and has superb material on it. Please see the separate article "The Official Home of Bing Crosby" by Richard Baker in this issue for further details.

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Information taken from the book *Bing Crosby: Day By Day* is posted frequently. There is also a discussion facility. The site had almost reached 12,000 fans in late February and then it welcomed the Bing Crosby Community Page fans to their site with the result they have now have an incredible 49,000 fans linked to it!

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material and Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography" and Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" have recently been added. See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

A Bing Crosby Discography

Maintained by our member, J. Richard Baker (known as

Jarbie), this excellent site can be found at:

http://tinyurl.com/BingCrosbyDiscography

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
is developing nicely. Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so.

Jon Oye's Blog

Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. A sample page is shown below. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

Contemplations on Classic Movies and Music
One For the Ages - The Forgotten Virtues of Going My Way
GOING MY WAY
Bing Crosby

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698) website: www.intuneinternational.com)

Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Nat King Cole International Fan Club, c/o Roy Holmes, 18 Rutland Drive, Morden, Surrey SM4 5QH, UK (phone: 020-8648-8858, web page:

www.highstreets.co.uk/kcc/index.shtml)

King Cole Comments is the club's newsletter and this is issued three times each year. For a free copy, please send a SAE to Roy Holmes.

Friends of Doris Day, c/o Dr. Sue G kg r, 71 East Avenue, Oxford OX4 1XR, UK. eMail: suegokgor@aol.com, web page: www.dorisday.net/Friends-of-Doris-Day.htm

Started in 1997, The Friends of Doris Day is an international Doris Day appreciation club based in Oxford, UK - and the only Doris Day fan club in the UK. The club publishes three 32 page magazines a year, packed full of articles and information you won't find anywhere else, including memorabilia signed by Doris herself for auction or sale. Subscription is £16 for UK members, £21 (or equivalent in Euro or US$) for Europe, £22 (or equivalent in US$) for other countries.

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Justin Clarke, 21 Main Rd., Wetley Rocks, Stoke-On-Trent, ST9 0BH, UK (phone: 01782 551103).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

(Web site: www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html)

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: www.jolson.org)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com ,

website: http://homepages.tesco.net/flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743).

A bi-monthly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world. Ken Barnes, who made those great albums with Bing in the 70s, is now Honorary President.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418).

Meetings take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Tara Towers Hotel, Dublin 4.

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

Books 'n' Bing

1. William Gillette, America's Sherlock Holmes by Henry Zecher, published by Xlibris; hardback ($34.99), paperback ($23.99) and ebook ($9.99), 733 pages, ISBN-978-1-4535-5580-4.

Your editor has to admit that he had never heard of William Gillette before receiving a press release for this book. In fact, Gillette (July 24, 1853 — April 29, 1937) was an American actor, playwright and stage-manager in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who is

best remembered today for portraying Sherlock Holmes. His portrayal of Holmes helped create the modern image of the detective. His use of the deerstalker cap and the curved pipe became synonymous with the character. The author is clearly an admirer of Bing too as he is mentioned several times in this book for his acting and for his innovative use of the microphone. Edward A. Wright, chairman of the Theatre Arts Department at Denison University, divided actors into two groups, "interpreters" and "impersonators". The book continues:

"The first group consists of what Wright called *Interpreters*, "personality actors" whose own personalities dominate the roles they play. You never fail to recognize the actor in each roll. Among film interpreters have been John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Ann-Margret and Sandra Bullock, but this in no way diminishes their ability as actors. There was no question that, in nearly every film he made, Crosby played the quintessential Bing Crosby. Yet director Frank Capra, who worked with the greatest stars in Hollywood, said, "I rate him in the top ten of all actors. He'd do anything and do it well…"

Some other quotes from the book praise Bing too.

"(Crosby) was a superior actor. Like his singing, however, he made his acting look so easy that no one could imagine the intricacy, the nuances of his performances. We simply absorbed them. Yet, he continued to downplay it. "I'm a singer, not an actor," he would say, and even when he won the Oscar for *Going My Way*, many agreed. "He's a great personality, one of the half-dozen or so great personalities of the screen," one critic wrote, "and Father O'Malley lay right down his alley. It was a beautiful demonstration of a brilliantly engaging personality, but don't call it acting."

"…Crosby had that quality. He, too, was a master of facial expressions and small and intricate gestures. "The average person thinks Bing just walks through his scenes," Bob Hope explained, "and he's right – and he does. That's one of the greatest assets in our business – the ability to just walk through scenes… He's got that great gift of phraseology, always coming up with the right words, always adding just the right little light comedy phrases. And, above all, he's one of the greatest underplayers of all times. Just watch him cut that scene down to one twitch of his face, one flick of his hand – great, nothing else." Crosby was a very expressive actor with dozens of expressions, facial ticks and vocal inflections to convey his thoughts and moods."

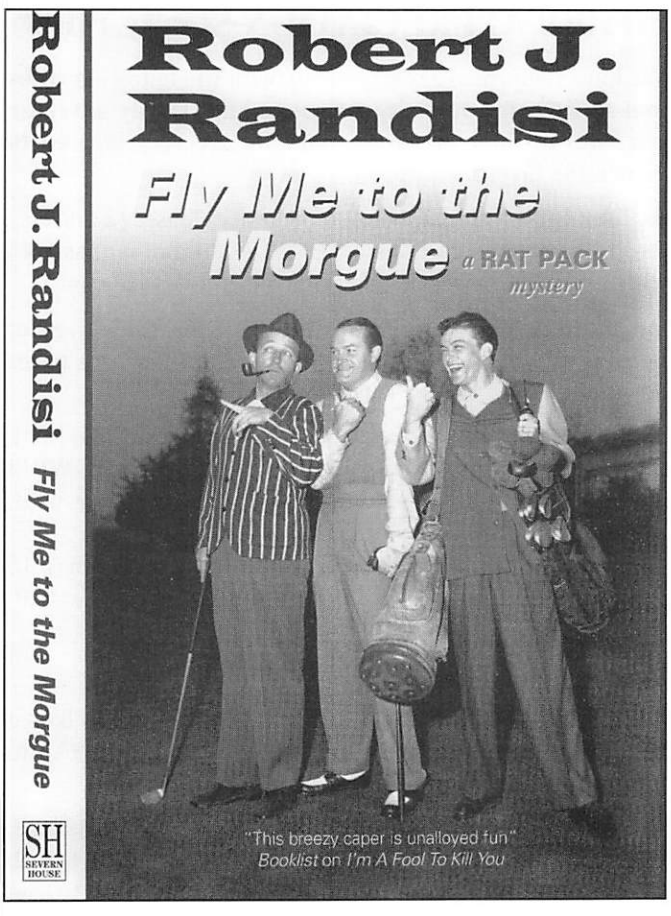
"Crosby's sense of comedy was always first-rate. He was highly entertaining, even in his earliest film shorts. Unlike Gillette, who moved as little as possible because he considered himself clumsy afoot, Bing's approach "was casual and he liked to move around," Frank Tuttle explained. "We worked out interesting pieces of business so that he wouldn't have to just stand there and deliver a number." A classic example of this is in *Rhythm on the River*, where he sings the title song in a pawn shop while nimbly bouncing a set of drum sticks off countertops, cymbals, brass instruments hanging from the ceiling and an actual set of drums.

"Bing might do several things simultaneously, and it looked so natural that – as he often said – the average fellow watching him imagined that he could do it, too. Among the quickest wits in the business, he would ad-lib brilliantly, usually adding to the already-written script rather than subtracting from it. Gillette the playwright kept his dialogue simple, more realistic and far from literary, but he was escaping the grand old melodramatic style which would later take over motion pictures. Bing went in the opposite direction. He loved "polysyllabic words, florid diction, particularly the juxtaposition of slang and a choice, precise, proper vocabulary."

2. Fly Me to the Morgue

by Robert J. Randisi, published by Severn House Publishers; hardback ($18.45 / £18.99), 192 pages, ISBN-10: 0727880152, ISBN-13: 978-0727880154.

A most unusual book has been published this year in a series entitled *The Rat Pack Mysteries* by Robert J. Randisi. This particular novel, entitled "Fly Me to the Morgue", is a crime thriller the central theme of which involves Bing Crosby and his attempts to buy a race horse. Mr. Randisi is no Raymond Chandler but nevertheless his story canters along at a lively pace involving a 'private eye' and his fairly low life partner engaged by Bing to investigate the disappearance of his trainer who has been sent to view the horse.


Robert J. Randisi
Fly Me to the Morgue
a RAT PACK mystery
Robert J. Randisi Fly Me to the Morgue
SH SEVERN HOUSE
"This breezy caper is unalloyed fun"
Booklist on I'm A Fool To Kill You

It has all the ingredients of a racy novel; murder, mayhem, a femme fatale and a disparate family plus, on the sidelines, the Las Vegas regulars; Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jnr., Bob Hope, Frank Jnr., et al. A rather bemused Bing gets carried along in unwitting involvement but is always seen in good light with, also, several flattering references to his wife Kathryn.

The author is quite knowledgeable about the time and place and, particularly, the real life characters that inhabit his story. Definitely a 'collector's item' especially as there is a great photograph of Bing, Bob Hope and Frank on a golf course not only on the dust jacket but also on the hard cover of the book itself.

Bert Bishop

3. The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Cultures from the Great Depression to the Cold War

by Anthony Burke Smith, University Press of Kansas, 284 pages. Hardcover: 284 pages ($28.59), ISBN-10: 0700617167, ISBN-13: 978-0700617166

This newish book (June 2010) has a nice picture of Bing as Father O'Malley on the cover. The Amazon product description states "When John Kennedy ran for president, some Americans thought a Catholic couldn't—or shouldn't—win the White House. Credit Bing Crosby, among others, that he did."

The book was reviewed by Barbara Stinson Lee in the *Intermountain Catholic* (Utah's official Catholic newspaper) in May. We quote from the review as follows:

"The Look of Catholics: Portrayals in Popular Culture from the Great Depression to the Cold War" by writer and historian Anthony Burke Smith, traces such public faces from Bing Crosby to Mel Gibson. Some of them are good and others questionable, from directors John Ford, Leo McCarey and Frank Capra to publisher Henry Luce, who gave special coverage to Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

One of the first stars given the best of the care is Bing Crosby, who portrayed Father O'Malley in a series of movies in the 1930s *(sic)*. The character first was seen in his seminary days in Cincinnati, then as a priest who played basketball with the boys in the school to which he was assigned. Fr. O'Malley also carefully sat by the side of his predecessor, played by Barry Fitzgerald. Crosby was one of the first movie-priests who made it possible to bring Catholicism to the big screen.

Crosby was followed by Spencer Tracy, James Cagney and Charles Boyer, among others."

A MASTER AT WORK

Cindy Pearlman's column in the *Chicago Sun-Times* of January 22 had a nice little mention of Bing.

LOS ANGELES — The man voted the scariest movie villain of all time is really a softie. Ask Anthony Hopkins about a show business moment that summed it all up for him and the 73-year-old legend tells a story.

"I saw Bing Crosby as an old man," he says. "I was on a studio lot and snuck into an auditorium where Bing was alone doing a little warm-up with all these kids around him. The lights were in his eyes and I knew he couldn't see me. So I just sat in the back row and watched a master at work.

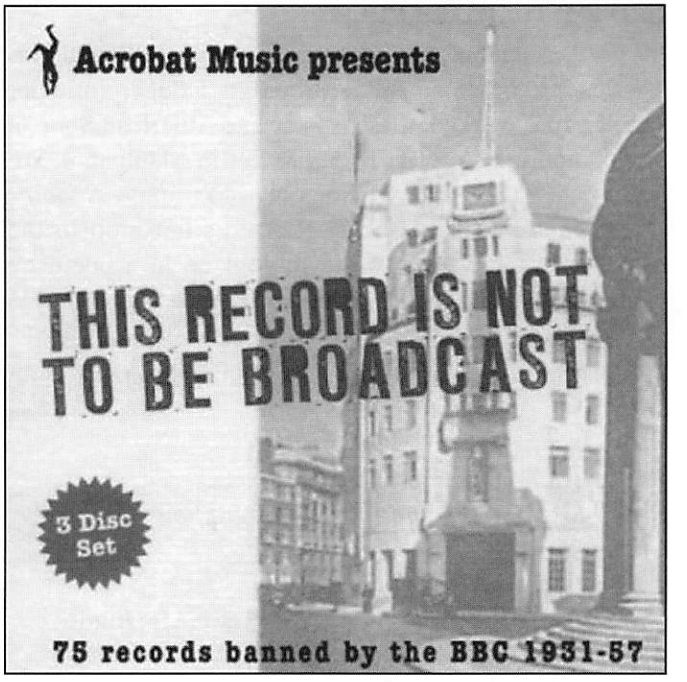
"It brought tears to my eyes. I thought, that's Crosby up there. The kids were in awe and I felt the same way. I saw the skill, the ease and the humor. That's how the pros did it. They knew that you didn't need a genius IQ to be an actor," he says. "You just need to know the text and show up."

Banned Bing

Martin McQuade has spotted an interesting item.

A very intriguing piece of information appeared in the September 20, 2008 issue of *The Guardian*. Tucked into a CD review by Martin Horsfield of "This Record Is Not Be Broadcast: 75 Records Banned by The BBC 1931 - 57," (Acrobat Records) is this revelation.

"The new compilation focuses on a bygone era when the institution took its role as gatekeeper of the nation's moral standards. Some bans were considerably arcane. Bing Crosby's "Deep in the Heart of Texas" was deemed so dangerously jaunty that it was outlawed in case factory workers downed tools, using them instead to beat out its rhythms."



Inexplicably, Bing's recording of "I'll Be Home for Christmas" also appears in this collection of recordings which outraged the BBC's shadowy Dance Music Policy Committee, which was set up in the thirties to serve as a

guardian of musical taste. Its avowed mission was to "buttress the forces of virtue against the unprincipled elements of the jungle." The membership of conductor Sir Arthur Bliss, the BBC's music director from 1942-1944, was credited with many of the more outrageous broadcast bans. He was particularly incensed by songs "slushy in sentiment" or pop versions of classical pieces. A 1942 directive read, "We have recently adopted a policy of excluding sickly sentimentality which, particularly when sung by certain vocalists, can become nauseating and not at all in keeping with what we feel to be the need of the public in this country in the fourth year of war."

Other outlaws represented in the release are Noel Coward ("Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans"), Tommy Dorsey ("Song of India"), Cab Calloway ("Minnie the Moocher"), Louis Armstrong ("Mack the Knife"), Billie Holiday ("Gloomy Sunday," God Bless the Child"), Ella Fitzgerald ("Bewitched"), Frank Sinatra ("The Cradle Song," "How Little We Know"), Perry Como, ("I'm Always Chasing Rainbows"), The Andrews Sisters ("Rum and Coca Cola"), The Mills Brothers ("Paper Doll"), Johnny Mercer ("Huggin' and Chalkin'") and on and on.

One could only hazard a guess as to how this official attitude, which came to be popularly known as "Auntie Knows Best," might react to the cacophonous vulgarities of today. Another, more immediate question: Which other Crosby recordings may have incurred the wrath of the Committee, whose files are available for inspection at the BBC's Written Archives Center in Caversham?

Gary Crosby's Dad

In 1949, long before the days of multi-million dollar salaries for baseball stars, Brooklyn Dodger infielder Phil Rizzuto worked off-season at The American Shop, a men's clothing store on Broad Street in Manhattan. We learn in Carlo DeVito's new biography *Scooter* (Triumph Books, 2010) that Rizzuto's devotion to the haberdashery's wares was mythologized in a poem by Ogden Nash. Entitled *The Diamond Dude*, this example of light verse originally appeared in the September 5th, 1955 issue of *Life Magazine* and contains a stanza with an oblique reference to Bing.

The suits are neat and unostentatious,
But as for sports clothes, goodness gracious!
No similar sight is to be had
This side of Gary Crosby's dad.

Martin McQuade

Bing in the lyrics

Some more songs which mention Bing have been spotted.

1. "If I Catch a Little Cold" (Durante & Merman) *"If I want to stay home to hear Bing"*
2. "My Sister's a Little Bit Crazy" (The Nilsson Twins) *"Just give me Bing"*
3. "My Baby Just Cares for Me" (Pat Boone) *"My baby don't care for Bing. She doesn't know who can sing."*
4. "My Baby Just Cares for Me" (Nat King Cole & Woody Herman) *"My baby's no Crosby fan"*
5. "Swing Is Back in Style" (Michael Feinstein) *"It's time to bring back Basie and Bing"*
6. "Protection" (Bob Hope & Rosemary Clooney) *"I just wanna do what Bing does"*
7. "You're the Top" (Louis Armstrong) *"You're Crosby's salary"*

The Great Country Hits

In our last issue Richard Baker gave information about the recording of this album but ICC member **Pat Shields** has raised a query as to whether Bing was actually there when the tracks were laid down by the musicians. Pat became friendly with Bill Justis (the leader and arranger) in the mid-60s. Pat's email continued:

"He and I were both in Los Angeles. He had moved here from Nashville for a couple of years to "test the water" for gigs as arranger or producer. I had lived here since 1962, and in 1967 I was representing one of the Nashville publishing companies. So it was as a song plugger that I first met Bill. He was a unique character with lots of great stories to tell. I had seen his name on Bing's country album (it contained several songs published by my company), so one of the first questions I asked was what it was like working with Bing. He said that the album was the strangest assignment he'd ever experienced! He had gotten the call that Bing would like him to arrange and produce an album of country songs, and wanted to listen to a couple of dozen that Bill thought might be appropriate. So Bill met him at Bing's office...he said Bing was very polite and very formal. Bing just said they'd get back to him about setting up the session. They sent Bill a list of Bing's song choices and he (Bill) went in with the musicians and cut the tracks. Then he waited to hear from Bing about coming in and recording his vocals. A week went by, then another...and finally, Bill called Bing's office to ask if Bing was ready to go. Bing's secretary explained that Bing had already gone in and finished the album and that "everyone" was quite pleased with the results! Bill was paid in full, but he never heard from Bing again."

So, according to Bill Justis, Bing wasn't there for the recordings on October 29 and 31, 1963 which may partly explain why the album was not released until late 1965. Richard Baker went back to his original source, Richard Price (who is compiling a discography of Glen Campbell) and Mr. Price responded saying that "The

matrix numbers, titles and dates on the AFM contracts match those in the Capitol Session File. Bing's name is not on the AFM contracts anywhere, but he is listed as the artist for these 3 sessions in the Capitol Session File."

So, does this confirm that Bing recorded his vocals later? Developments are awaited.

BING'S "B" MASTERS

John Newton is back with another look at some very rare Bing records.

When record collectors—or Bing Crosby aficionados—generally speak of "B" masters, the topic is usually in reference to the second "take" made during a recording session. The letter "B" in such cases would have been the suffix following a location prefix and a master/matrix number, all of which provided identifying information for a particular recording.

The topic discussed here, however, concerns an entirely different group of "B" masters, these being recordings that were prefixed with a "B" and recorded for purposes far different and apart from Bing's commercial recording activities. Wig Wiggins and I have had several discussions about these recordings over months and years, with Wig finally convincing me that it might be informative to Bing fans and collectors if I were to give a detailed explanation of how these interesting, yet somewhat mysterious, recordings came about.

Before going further, just to avoid confusion, I should point out that some of Bing's commercial recordings for Brunswick in the 1932-1933 period were prefixed with a "B", to identify two series of masters made for Brunswick records; a three-digit series designated for recordings made in Los Angeles, and a five-digit series for New York recordings.

The "B" prefixed recordings discussed here are all of a non-commercial nature, recorded and/or mastered and pressed for purposes other than issues for the general public. The company that produced these "B" prefixed masters was a company called Recordings, Inc.

The services performed by Recordings, Inc. included the use of their recording studios for private or personal records, as well as the use of their facilities to transfer optical sound recordings on film to disc masters, with subsequent pressings, usually pressed via connection with the Allied Phonograph & Record Manufacturing Co. of Hollywood.

Recordings, Inc. also produced many non-commercial pressings for Decca, including private and personal Decca recordings, test pressings, and so on. Recordings made in the Recordings, Inc. studios were both familiar and convenient, particularly for Bing.

The studios were located at 5505 Melrose Avenue, Hollywood, an address that is adjacent to the film studios of Paramount Pictures. Significantly, the Recordings, Inc. facilities were also used for virtually all of American Decca's West Coast recordings activities from the company's inception in 1934 onward. Ultimately these studios became Decca property when Decca assumed ownership circa 1941 (Decca's ownership at this point also approximates the demise of the "B" master series).

When one hears some of Bing's earlier personal recordings, such as the Decca 2nd Anniversary recording or his "Sweet Is the Word for You" blow-up, the originals were pressed by Recordings, Inc. These pressings are invariably of a higher quality than Decca's commercial record output (the commercial pressings of American Decca's regular issues were produced elsewhere, at a significantly lesser cost with cheaper materials, the result being of lesser quality.)

Getting back to the "B" prefixed recordings, the goodly majority of these recordings were made for Hollywood's various film studios. They are often, though not always, recordings that were transferred onto disc from optical film tracks made at the film studios.

20th Century-Fox had a substantial number of these B-prefixed records made for use in their film production work, but other studios also had these discs produced, including Universal, RKO, Columbia and Paramount (throughout the 1930's most of Paramount's studio disc production was performed by RCA Victor in Hollywood).

A great variety of movie stars appear on recordings within this B-prefix group. Performances by Alice Faye, Mae West, Al Jolson, The Boswell Sisters, Dick Powell, Ethel Merman, Eddie Cantor, Shirley Temple, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and a host of others are found within this series of recordings. Even the great W.C. Fields went into the studios of Recordings, Inc. one summer day in 1937, along with Don Ameche and Edgar Bergen (and Charlie McCarthy, naturally,) to make a

private recording that was to be played just once at the Chase & Sanborn coffee salesmen's convention that year (Chase & Sanborn was the sponsor of their radio program).

Along with these other great stars, Bing Crosby's name is sprinkled amongst those previously mentioned. Bing's earliest appearance among these B-masters is on a 12-inch, one-sided pressing of "It's Easy to Remember" (B-1976) recorded for his film *Mississippi*. (Studio discs of Bing's other songs for this film were pressed by Victor).

Bing's next appearance in the series, B-2078, contained the film track recordings that Bing made for the St. Columban missionary film short (private pressings were sold for fund-raising for the missionary group). Following shortly afterward were a group of four numbers, B-2093, B-2094, B-2095 and B-2096, each of which contained a song or excerpt recorded off-the-air from one of Bing's Woodbury Soap broadcasts. The selections recorded were "Ol' Faithful", "Blame It on My Youth", "Lullaby of Broadway" and "Clouds".

Bing next appeared on two single-sided 12-inch pressings (both un-numbered), each of which contained a song recorded for his 1936 film *Rhythm on the Range*, which was then in production. One disc contains "The House Jack Built for Jill", a charming duet with his co-star, Frances Farmer. While this number was obviously recorded, it never appeared in the released film. The other title was "I'm an Old Cowhand". Again, similar to *Mississippi*, Bing's other songs from this film were pressed by Victor.

The next several pressings in this series that contain Bing vocals are somewhat different from the preceding. The following seven pressings, each of which is single-sided, are what are termed "demo" discs, made prior to film production to "demonstrate" songs that were being considered and might - or might not - be used in a forthcoming film production. Listening to the "demo" recordings, produced over a span of several years, it is interesting to hear some of Bing's initial interpretations of songs that were proposed for his films.

The first of this group is B-4852, "The Moon Got in My Eyes" for the film *Double or Nothing*. Next were two songs for the film *Sing You Sinners*; B-6561 "Where Is Central Park" and "I've Got a Pocketful of Dreams". The label on "Central Park" indicates that an early working title of the film was *Harmony for Three*. This working title was later changed to *The Unholy Beebes*, then changed again to the now familiar *Sing You Sinners*. "Central Park", we know, never made it to filming, but the bouncy "Pocketful of Dreams" obviously worked out nicely.

The next two demo recordings were made just prior to Bing's 1939 venture at Universal Studios, a film titled *East Side of Heaven*. Bing apparently was not fully familiar with the material, especially in his recording of the first of the two discs (B-7319), the title song of the film. Despite his usual uncanny ear for melody, he is a bit off key and flat when singing one section of the song, and he is, again apparently, not enamored with the song as he makes negative comments at the beginning of the recording when announcing the title and composers. He lays verbally short betting odds for its chances. The second title, "Sing a Song of Sunbeams" (B-7320) also received his comments at the beginning, this time in a favorable vein with indications that he was more pleased with this selection and giving it better odds for success. The recording of the title song received the benefit of a chorus of Bing's grand whistling, a feature that is absent from his commercial recording and in the film. "Sing a Song of Sunbeams" includes the original lyric of "suckers for a grin" (as he later sang it in the film) - a lyric that was modified to "softies for a grin" at Decca when the commercial recording was made.

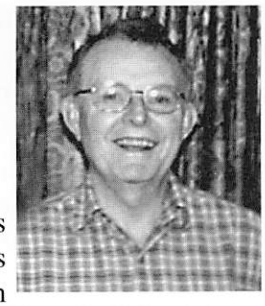
Back at Paramount the next year, demo discs were made for two selections proposed for *Rhythm on the River*. The first title, "When the Moon Comes over Madison Square" (B-7691) was definitely an acceptable choice, while the second title "Beware! I'm Beginning To Care" (B-7692) was rejected and never filmed.

Three additional "B" masters conclude this listing. The first two, "I Have Eyes" (B-7252) and "The Funny Old Hills" (B-7253) are anomalies that somehow appear on some pressings of Bing's regular issue blue Decca 2201. The recordings are identical to the commercially released DLA- prefixed pressings, and the reason for their appearance with B-prefix masters remains a mystery. The last, "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" is apparently a rehearsal for Bing's commercial recording of this title.

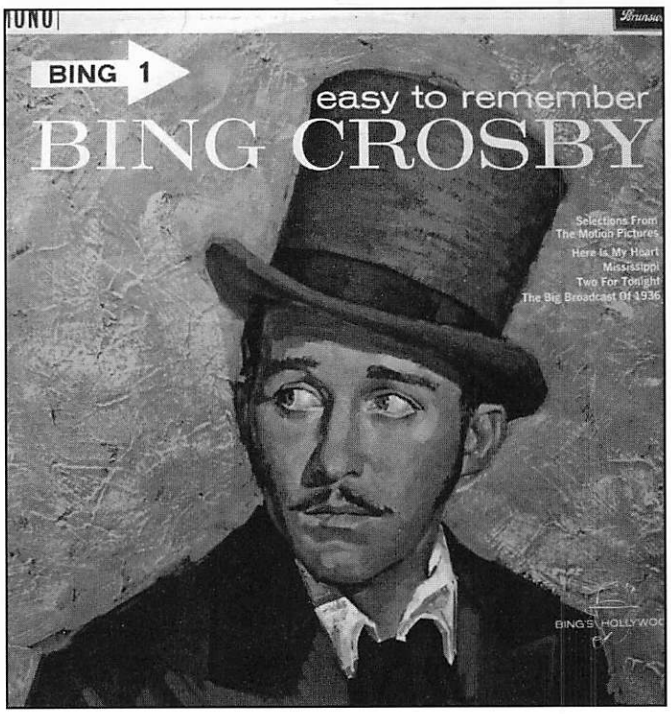
Were any more of these "demo" discs with "B" masters made by Bing? Or additional odd pressings within this series? Hopefully, a Bing collector out there somewhere has something to add to this brief grouping. Please let us know.

John Newton

Celluloid Crosby



Following in the wake of the ICC's 75th birthday celebrations comes another Crosby landmark date. It is almost fifty years since the fifteen album set of "Bing's Hollywood" LPs was released by Decca. Collected together were around 180 tracks of songs spanning Bing's film career from the mid-thirties to the mid-fifties. There had never been a simultaneous marketing of such a collection of recordings and Decca ensured that it was a prestigious event. Each album was given a unique catalogue number from BING 1 to BING 15. The cover for each disc was adorned with a specially commissioned painting of Bing pertinent to the period covered by the songs on the album. Such was the appeal of these covers that the late Fred Reynolds showed me a spare set he had acquired. When Rackhams, the Birmingham department store, was promoting the release of the "Bing's Hollywood" set they mounted a display of the LP covers and Fred made sure those covers did not find their way onto the scrap heap.



When the albums became available at around thirty-five shillings each (just under $5 then) I could not afford to buy more than one every couple of weeks. At the time I was paying for a motorbike and a tape recorder by instalments. And I also had a girlfriend to support. In fact it was through my girlfriend that those fifteen discs found their way onto the turntable of my Dansette record player. She ensured that a couple turned up at Christmas and on my birthday until I had the set. "Bing's Hollywood" LPs remained in the Decca catalogue until the late 1960s, by which time we were Mr and Mrs. Yes, dear reader, I married my benefactor. And the discs are still safely stored in the loft.

This is an article about films and covers a different Bing's Hollywood. The Hollywood film companies often created their studios or the Hollywood district of Los Angeles on film and Bing was featured in several. What was presented on screen was quite different from reality but it illustrated how the movie capital of the world wished to be seen. In fact, the most accurate picture of a small Hollywood studio is illustrated by the six Mack Sennett shorts which Bing made in the early 'thirties. Sennett operated on a shoestring budget. The location for those shorts was the studio backlot. However, Hollywood and its environs was not a plot fixture in those shorts and I am going to examine the three features which showed Bing in a fictionalised setting:

Going Hollywood (1933)

Plot - Marion Davies is infatuated with Bing. He goes to Hollywood to shoot a film and she follows.

The film studio depicted in *Going Hollywood* was called Independent Art. The actual production company was Cosmopolitan Pictures, a company partly financed by William Randolph Hearst as a showcase for his mistress, Marion Davies. Cosmopolitan used M-G-M to distribute it films. At this time Bing was contracted to Paramount under a three picture deal. Arthur Freed was associated with M-G-M as a producer of that studio's musicals in later years, but in 1933 he was employed as a songwriter and co-composed the half dozen songs delivered by Bing in the film.

The song from that film which became a standard was "Temptation". Around the time that the M-G-M compilation *That's Entertainment"* - with some extracts from *Going Hollywood* - was released in 1974, Freed had this to say about Crosby's loan out from Paramount:

> *Sometimes we [Freed and Nacio Herb Brown] wrote the song ahead of time and then we'd use it in a picture. Like we had written "Temptation" before we knew it was going to be used in 'Going Hollywood'. That's why I wanted to get Bing Crosby, because I knew Marion Davies couldn't sing it. So I got the studio to borrow Bing, who was under contract to Paramount, through Louella Parsons because the picture was a Cosmopolitan Picture in which Hearst was a partner. And Hearst didn't like Bing. And I had a tough time selling Hearst on letting me use Bing opposite Marion.*

The reference to Louella Parsons shows how influential a person she was. Although a semi-literate gossip columnist with the Hearst newspaper group she could affect the casting of major motion pictures. The

reason Freed gave for Hearst not liking Bing was Crosby's reputation as a womaniser and drinker.

Star Spangled Rhythm (1942).

Plot - The Paramount Studio gateman, played by Victor Moore, tells his son (Eddie Bracken) that he is head of production at the studio. Paramount contract stars give a benefit performance and Bing sings "Old Glory".

This was the last of three films made by Bing in 1942, excluding a walk on part in *My Favourite Blonde.* Ten years on from *Going Hollywood* he was Paramount's biggest asset and an international box-office draw. During the Second World War the salaries of the highest paid United States citizens were often made public. In 1942 Bing was up there with the best of them having personal earnings of $336,111. *Star Spangled Rhythm* was not really a Crosby film - he was not integral to the flimsy plot - although it did register in the U.S. box-office top ten for 1943. But at the very end of 1942 there was an ominous sign of things to come. On December 30th Frank Sinatra commenced a four week stay at the New York Paramount as featured singer with the Benny Goodman band. He was more popular than the film being screened. That was *Star Spangled Rhythm.*

Variety Girl (1947)

Plot - Mary Hatcher and Olga San Juan head for Hollywood in the hope of film stardom.

This film has links with Bing's past and future. A significant segment of the film centres on a Variety Club banquet at Los Angeles' Cocoanut Grove. The Grove was situated within the Ambassador Hotel. In 1930 Bing appeared there as one of the Rhythm Boys and in September of that year his solo performance of "When the Folks High up Do the Mean Low Down" for the film *Reaching for the Moon* was filmed there in the early hours of the morning after his earlier cabaret appearance at the venue. The link with things to come is provided by Frank Tashlin. Paramount logs indicate that Tashlin was paid for 95 days work on the script of *Variety Girl.* Tashlin would direct Bing in *Say One for Me* (1959). Almost all of Paramount's major contract players were featured as themselves in *Variety Girl.* That resulted in the film's finale being shot on a Sunday afternoon because it was the only way to bring the entire cast together at one time. In a picture with a multitude of talent, common practice was for alphabetical billing on the film's credits. Paramount broke with tradition and listed those appearing in order of studio rating. Thus: Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Gary Cooper, Ray Milland, Alan Ladd ... etc. Watching the film now, the Crosby and Hope duet on "Harmony" doesn't gel with the rest of the film. One reason could be that it was a song excised from the 1946 release *Road to Utopia.* Or is it just coincidence that the boys wear identical chequered suits to those they sported in the earlier film?

Bing and Bob sing "Harmony"

As a postscript to Bing's film association with Hollywood here are two further links:

It Happened in Hollywood (1937).

This 67 minute 'B' picture from Columbia stars Richard Dix. He plays a western star troubled by the coming of sound to films. He cannot cope with dialogue.

Then he becomes a hero by foiling a bank robbery. He finds himself in demand by the Hollywood studios. He is invited to a party and mixes with the likes of Clark Gable, James Cagney, Charlie Chaplin, Fred Astaire and Bing Crosby. All played by doubles, of course.

Sunset Boulevard (1950).

Made for Paramount it starred Gloria Swanson. She played the part of Norma Desmond who thinks Cecil B DeMille wants to cast her in one of his films following phone calls made to her mansion. In fact, the phone calls were about renting her old Italian limousine "for the Crosby picture."

Keith Parkinson

WHITING, RICHARD A. (1891-1938) Composer. It was towards the end of his life that Richard Whiting had two of his songs featured in Crosby movies. Both had lyrics by Leo Robin. The first, "Sailor Beware", came from *Anything Goes* (1936). It was followed the same year by "I Can't Escape from You" which Bing sang in *Rhythm on the Range.* Whiting arrived in Hollywood in 1928, when talking pictures were creating an instant demand for new vocal material. Some of his most memorable songs were written in collaboration with Johnny Mercer like "Too Marvellous for Words" and "Ride, Tenderfoot, Ride". One of the finest interpreters of his songs was his daughter, Margaret.

WHOLLY SMOKE Cartoon. Frank Tashlin was behind this Warner Bros. cartoon of 1938. Its theme was tobacco smoking and "starred" Porky Pig, who came into contact with caricatures of Bing as well as the Mills Brothers, Cab Calloway, Rudy Vallee and the Three Stooges.

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD WOLF Song. We hear just a snatch of this Ronnell-Frank Churchill composition when Bing includes it in a medley known as "I Positively Refuse to Sing" which was featured in *We're Not Dressing* (1934). The song became popular during the American Depression after its inclusion in the Walt Disney animated short *Three Little Pigs* (1933).

WICKES, MARY [Mary Isabelle Wickenhauser] (1910-1995) Actress. She played the switchboard operator in *White Christmas* (1954) who gave Rosemary Clooney the wrong impression regarding Bing's motive for appearing on television. She was usually a wisecracking busybody in productions as varied as *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (1942) and *The Music Man* (1962). The Disney studio was always on the lookout for slightly eccentric, recognisable character actors and they used her to their advantage in the likes of *Napoleon and Samantha* and *Snowball Express*, both released in 1972.

WILCOXON, HENRY [Harry Wilcoxon] (1905-1984) Actor. He played Sir Lancelot in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1949). It was a typical role for Wilcoxon, who moved to Hollywood after seven years on the London stage. His early film parts will give you an idea as to how casting directors saw him. He played Marc Anthony in *Cleopatra* (1934), Richard the Lionhearted in *The Crusades* (1935) and Major Duncan Heyward in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1936). He was married for a time to Joan Woodbury, who had a small role in *Blue Skies* (1946). He was a close friend of Cecil B. DeMille and in the 1950s was involved in the production of *The Greatest Show on Earth* (1952), *The Ten Commandments* (1956) and *The Buccaneer* (1959) as well as appearing in the first two. Rather than quit show business he took on parts that were not worthy of him, his last two film appearances being in *Caddyshack* (1980) and *Sweet Sixteen* (1981).

WILDER, BILLY [Samuel Wilder] (1906-2002) Writer and director. It was as a writer that Billy Wilder first played a part in advancing Bing's film career when he provided a story written in collaboration with Jacques Thery that became the basic plot of *Rhythm on the River* (1940). He first directed Bing without credit in a scene for *Welcome Stranger* (1947). That came about because the film's assigned director, Elliot Nugent, wanted to act in a sequence when he played the part of a doctor examining Barry Fitzgerald. And so an obliging Wilder took charge for half an hour or so. Three months later Wilder was in total charge for *The Emperor Waltz* (1948). Wilder did not feel that the Crosby feature played a significant part in his directorial career even though he was also responsible for the film's screenplay in tandem with his long time collaborator Charles Brackett. Certainly coming immediately after his Academy Award winning *The Lost Weekend* (1945) and immediately before *A Foreign Affair* (1948) for which he received an Academy Award nomination as co-writer, *The Emperor Waltz* seems a somewhat lacklustre affair. But even Wilder on a bad day turned out films which are watchable half a century later. His artistic and popularity peak was at the end of the 1950s when *Some Like it Hot* (1959) was followed by *The Apartment* (1960). His last film was *Buddy Buddy* (1981) but the next twenty years found him readily available for making acerbic quips about latter day Hollywood. There are half a dozen biographies detailing his career. Most are peppered with Wilder anecdotes. The best book to date is "Conversations with Wilder" by Cameron Crowe, published in 1999.

WILLIAMS, RHYS (1897-1969) Character actor. It was Rhys Williams, in the role of Dr. McKay in *The Bells of St. Mary's* (1945), that told Father O'Malley (Bing) that Sister Benedict (Ingrid Bergman) was suffering from tuberculosis. Because he came to Hollywood from Wales, director John Ford took advantage of his accent by casting him in *How Green Was My Valley* (1940). Yet it was western films that kept Rhys Williams in irregular employment. He can be seen in *The Kentuckian* (1955), *The Fastest Gun Alive* (1956) and *The Sons of Katie Elder* (1965).

WILLIAMS, SPENCER (1889-1965) Composer who was actually born on Basin Street in New Orleans. He wrote the music to Roger Graham's words for "I Ain't Got Nobody" in 1915 and Bing sang it on screen in *Paris Honeymoon* (1939). Williams was a much travelled man. He moved from New York to

Paris in 1925 when he was Josephine Baker's piano accompanist. He spent time in Sunbury, Middlesex, where he formed a music publishing company. Before returning to Paris in 1932 to work with Fats Waller he lived for a while in Stockholm. He settled in Paris for twenty-five years before returning to the U.S.A. in 1957. Almost all of Spencer Williams' hit songs predate his wanderings. Those still remembered in the twenty-first century include "I Found a New Baby" (1919), "Everybody Loves My Baby" (1924) and "Basin Street Blues" (1928).

WILLS, CHILL (1903-1978) Singer turned character actor. Once you have heard Bing and The Avalon Boys singing Cole Porter's "There'll Always Be a Lady Fair" in *Anything Goes* (1936) any other version pales by comparison. In part that is because of the group's leader and bass vocalist, Chill Wills. The quartette appeared in several westerns up to 1938 when Wills decided to concentrate on a career as character actor. He worked almost exclusively in cowboy pictures and received a Best Supporting Actor nomination for his performance in *The Alamo* (1960). Perhaps it was his frequent appearances in horse operas that won Wills the job of providing the voice of Francis, the Talking Mule, in that comedy film series. Unfortunately, by the time a record company signed him to make his first singing album in 1975 his voice had lost the appeal it held when he worked with Bing forty years earlier.

WING, TOBY [Martha Virginia Wing] (1915-2001). Actress. Like Bing, she made a transition from Mack Sennett shorts to Paramount features. She played the friend of Margie 'Babe' Kane (Bing's girl) in the Sennett short *Blue of the Night* (1932). Admittedly, the Crosby Paramount films featured her in bit parts. For the record, they were *College Humor* (1933) and *Too Much Harmony* (1933). The final Crosby-Wing link was the short *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* (1935) where she is introduced as a member of the audience. Toby Wing's problem seemed to be that she was tremendously photogenic but was unable to sustain her appeal when on screen. She happened to be under contract to Paramount at the same time as Marlene Dietrich. Dietrich's daughter said: "Toby walked into a room and every man in the place would turn and stare. Mother hated her for that reason." Eventually Toby Wing felt Hollywood had ignored her for too long and she went to New York to appear on Broadway in "You Never Know". It made no impact. She decided to try the movies again but this time under the name Linda Dale. She was cast in *Marines Come Thru* (1943). No further offers followed and it was her final film. For half a century she was forgotten. She was not listed in any film reference books or encyclopaedias and it was not until she was interviewed for the 1998 documentary *Busby Berkeley - Going Through the Roof* that film buffs recognised her as one of the chorus girls from several Warner Bros. musicals during 1933 and 1934.

WINNINGER, CHARLES (1884-1969) Actor. In *If I Had My Way* (1940) Charles Winninger played Joe Johnson, the ex-vaudevillian whose show business colleagues agreed to appear at the re-launch of the restaurant which Bing's friend Axel (El Brendel) had acquired. It was a kindly act, the sort of thing we expected of Winninger, the genial senior citizen who you could always trust whether that was in *Showboat* (1936), *State Fair* (1945) or *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953). I never saw his final film, *The Miracle of Santa's White Reindeer* (1963) but I just know that whatever he did to the animal will be all right by me.

Charles Winninger with Gloria Jean and Bing in *If I Had My Way*

WITH EVERY BREATH I TAKE Song. Kitty Carlisle is on the receiving end of Bing's musical declaration in *Here Is My Heart* (1934). Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger wrote it to order for the film and Bing liked it sufficiently to make it his sole musical contribution to the short *Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove* released the following year.

WITHERSPOON, CORA (1890-1957) Character actress. Cora Witherspoon did not play the part of likeable ladies in her twenty year film career. Matronly and domineering, her characters never figured in popularity polls. So in *Just for You* (1952) we are pleased that Jordan Blake (Bing) dismisses her from her job as governess to Babs Blake (Natalie Wood) when, as Miss Agevine, she takes part in a drunken brawl. It proved to be her final appearance on film.

WITHOUT A WORD OF WARNING Song. The main love ballad from *Two for Tonight* (1935). Bing sang it twice to Joan Bennett to let her know he cared. He also sang it twice for Decca, in 1935 and again in 1951, so he must have found it appealing. Like the other songs from *Two for Tonight* it was written by Mack Gordon and Harry Revel.

WOOD, NATALIE [Natasha Gurdin] (1938-1981) Actress. She played Bing's daughter in *Just for You* (1952) by which time she was a veteran of half a dozen films, having made her screen debut in *Happy Land* (1943). She first made an impact as a child star in *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947). By her mid teens she had made the successful transition to playing "grown-ups", as evidenced by her role in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), for which she received an Academy Award nomination. Two further nominations followed, the first in 1960 for *Splendour in the Grass*, the other four years later for *Love with the Proper Stranger.* There are several biographies which detail her marriages to Robert Wagner (twice) and Richard Gregson, plus her affairs with, amongst others, Frank Sinatra, Nicholas Ray and Raymond Burr. None of them provide a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances surrounding her death by drowning after falling from a yacht.

WOODS ARE FULL OF CUCKOOS, THE Cartoon. Released by Warners on 4th December, 1937, it was about a radio show called "Woodland Community Swing" and included caricatures of radio stars doing their turns. Walter Finchell is commentator, Louella Possums the reporter and Fred McFurry, W. C. Fieldmouse and Bing Crowsby the performers.

WOODS, DONALD [Ralph L. Zink] (1906-1998) Actor. Canadian born Woods had played leading roles in Hollywood productions such as *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935) before he was relegated to supporting roles, two of which were in Crosby pictures. The first was *If I Had My Way* (1940) when he played Bing's work colleague and the father of Gloria Jean. Ten years later the parts offered to him were shrinking when he appeared in *Mr. Music*. In that one he was Tippy Carpenter, the millionaire admirer of Ruth Hussey. After Bing serenaded the Hussey character with "High on the List" it was Woods who sent a bottle of champagne to their table. By then he was looking to television for regular employment and he was in three series, the last, and best known, being "Tammy" in 1965-1966.

WOODS, HARRY [Harry MacGregor Woods] (1896-1970) Composer. In the early thirties Harry Woods part wrote two Crosby film songs. "Lovable", with lyrics by Gus Kahn, was featured in the Sennett short *Sing, Bing, Sing* (1932), whilst "Just an Echo in the Valley", written in collaboration with Jimmy Campbell and Reg Connolly, was sung by Bing in three films made a couple of years later. It was first aired in the short *Just an Echo* (1933), formed part of a medley in *College Humor* (1933) and was the subject of a brief excerpt in *Going Hollywood* (1934). Woods first major hit was "Paddlin' Madeline Home" in 1925. Thereafter the hits flowed. Think of the royalties generated over the years with songs that enjoy a constant revival such as "When the Red, Red Robin Comes Bob, Bob, Bobbin' Along", "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover", "Side by Side" and "River Stay 'Way from My Door", all written in collaboration with Mort Dixon in the years before he wrote the two Crosby film songs. But the songwriting successes dwindled to nothing as the 1930s progressed. His personal circumstances would make him a good candidate for the sort of musical bio-pic that Hollywood turned out once upon a time. Born with no fingers on his left hand his mother taught him to play piano. Until 1926 he was a gentleman farmer in Cape Cod. By the late 1930s he had become unreliable, sometimes disappearing for days on end. He died after being knocked down by a car.

WOODS, HARRY (1889-1968) Character actor, specialising in playing heavies. His brief role in a Crosby picture cast him as the ship's purser in *Road to Rio* (1948). His c.v. began with a part in the 1914 serial *The Perils of Pauline* and concluded with a bit in the TV series *Lawman* in 1961.

WOULD YOU Song. Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen wrote it for *Road to Utopia* (1946). It was a typical Crosby love ballad of the time yet it was assigned to Dorothy Lamour for its outing in that film. A recording for Decca made it a Crosby keepsake.

WOULDN'T IT BE FUNNY Song. Another Burke-Van Heusen effort, this time delivered by Bing in his role as composer Paul Merrick in *Mr. Music* (1950). "Wouldn't it be funny if I didn't miss you" he muses and then writes the song in next to no time. He goes on to sing it to his girl friend played by Ruth Hussey after she tells him that she is leaving to marry someone else.

Keith Parkinson

BING ON THE SOUNDTRACK

THE MUSIC NEVER STOPPED (2011). This recently released film stars J.K. Simmons ("Spider-Man," "Juno") as a Bing Crosby-loving dad who, in the late '60s, has a falling-out with his hippie son (Lou Taylor Pucci). The son can't really communicate except when rock music is played for him, in a process that seems to unclog his neural pathways, which were damaged by a benign brain tumor. Bing is heard on the soundtrack singing the version of "Young at Heart" recorded for the GE show.

The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad

In our last issue, we gave information about a Frank Capra season at the British Film Institute in London. Well, they have followed that with a season called *The Disney 50* which looked at fifty animated features from the Walt Disney studio. April 9 and 16 saw the showing of the Ichabod cartoon featuring Bing and our thanks to John Benstead for telling us about this.

Movie Collector's World

ICC member **Joe McGrenra** from Virginia Beach had a long and detailed article about Bing published in the March issue of *Movie Collector's World*. He also got Bing on the cover too! Well done, Joe.

Joe tells me that the article was not really aimed at Bing fans but towards classic movie aficionados illustrating that whether they like Bing's music or not, he was a major film star.

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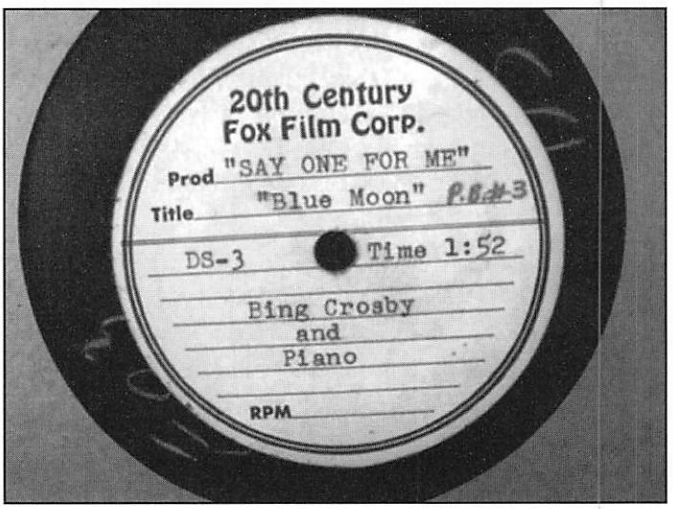
BLUE MOON



Some of you may remember that a version of this song by Bing appeared on one of the Crosbyana LPs many years ago. It was assumed that it was a rehearsal with Buddy Cole and I seem to recall that a 1956 date was given on the LP. Well, the song appeared on eBay recently and as you can see the label suggests that it was planned to use it in the film "Say One for Me". There was a scene where Bing sings "I Couldn't Care Less" with Ray Walston on the piano so it could have been used at that juncture.

Memories of White Christmas and the Bob Mitchell Boys Choir

Kathy Brown, a Rosemary Clooney devotee who has been heavily involved in the Rosemary Clooney websites, recently traced **Tony Butala**, who was famous as one of **The Lettermen**. He was also a member of the Bob Mitchell Boys Choir from 1951 to 1954 and Kathy has made her interview recordings and notes available to us.

First some background. In BING 153, we published the obituary of Bob Mitchell, organist and founder of the Robert Mitchell Boys Choir who had died on July 4, 2009 at the age of 96. Shortly after being appointed organist of St. Brendan's Church, Los Angeles in 1934, Mitchell organized The Robert Mitchell Boys Choir, also known as Bob Mitchell's Singing Boys. Ideally located in Los Angeles, they were cast in over 100 films in the Musical era from the 1930s through to the end of the 1960s. Their most notable appearances were probably *Going My Way* (1944) with Bing, *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) with James Cagney, *The Jolson Story* (1946) and the Christmas classic, *The Bishop's Wife* (1947). The choir also took part in Bing's first TV appearance in December 1948 when he sang "Silent Night" with them. That same month, the choir played a prominent part in Bing's Philco Show broadcast on December 22. Although not billed, members of the choir also played a part in *White Christmas* (1954).

Anthony Francis Butala was born in Sharon, Pennsylvania and was the eighth of eleven children. Tony began his professional singing career in 1946, going on to appear in "Starlets on Parade", a Saturday morning show on KDKA radio in Pittsburgh, as well as performing live as an Al Jolson, Ted Lewis and Eddie Cantor impersonator. In 1951, Butala's mother, who was a nurse, was called to California to assist her cousin, who had been stricken with pneumonia and needed assistance with her children while she recovered. Tony's father, believing that there could be opportunities for his son on the West Coast, suggested that Tony accompany his mother to California. Tony quickly found work with the Robert Mitchell Boys Choir and performed with the choir through 1954.

Tony recalled his audition with Bob Mitchell with a smile. After he handed over his charts, he went into his impressions of Jolson, Cantor and Ted Lewis. Mitchell

quickly stopped him and made him sing in his ordinary voice. This impressed Mitchell who then signed Butala to the choir. Tony's voice can be heard as "Lost Boy Slightly" in *Peter Pan* (1953) and together with other members of the choir, he is part of the chorus supporting the main stars in singing the title song in the finale of *White Christmas*.

Kathy Brown asked Tony whether the choir was affiliated with a church during his tenure and Tony indicated that it was not. It was a professional choir of between twenty and forty boys which sang on national radio broadcasts, on records, in motion pictures and on television, with most of the radio, record, movie and television stars of those days.

Each year, usually in the fall, Bob Mitchell would hold auditions to hire a new young class of choirboys because every twelve months about four or five of the boys would mature, grow too tall and could no longer sing as a boy soprano. (For instance, Tony grew from 4' 11" to 5' 4" while he was in the choir). Bob Mitchell would send out flyers to all of the schools in Los Angeles announcing these auditions.

Tony said that before he signed the contract to be a Mitchell Choirboy, it was explained to him and his mother that he would become a member of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) and the American Guild of Variety Artists (AGVA), in order to be able to work as a choirboy. So he knew from the start that he could be appearing in films.

Being a choirboy was very much a real job. Apart from the California minimum four hours of regular schooling per day taught by the Mitchell Choirboy School Tutors, Tony had at least four additional hours of singing and sight reading music classes. Each weekend the choir got paid to sing at weddings, funerals, the Wilshire Temple in Hebrew and Yiddish, St. Anne's Malachite Rite Church in Greek and Arabic, All Saints Episcopal Church in English, and Good Shepherd Church in Latin. In all the choirboys sang in over twenty languages including Italian, Spanish, French, German, Portuguese and Dutch, which enabled the choir to perform in tours of Europe, Mexico and Canada.

Bing Crosby

As a member of the Mitchell Choirboys, Tony Butala worked with, and for, Bing many times. After working with the choir in *Going My Way,* Bing and Bob Mitchell became very good friends. Bing would hire the choir to sing at various private functions at his home and at his golf course at Christmas parties, family reunions and fundraisers. In 1952, the choir sang for Dixie's funeral at The Good Shepherd Church in Beverly Hills. Tony recalled that at most of Bing's functions at his home or elsewhere, there were always a lot of people and usually many celebrities like Bob Hope, Jack Benny, George Burns, Georgie Jessel, Eddie Cantor, Jimmy Durante, Loretta Young and in the later years Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin.

Tony remembered "Mr. Crosby", as they were taught to refer to him, as always being friendly, kind and congenial to each and every boy at all times, always making a point to do extra "kidding" with whoever was the littlest and youngest boy in the choir.

Kathy asked Tony what he observed about Bing's "process" or "preparation" for acting and singing but Tony indicated that it was so long ago that it was hard to remember specific instances. However he does recollect that Bing was always prepared for whatever he had to do and would always be open to try a song with a little twist to it. For instance on the film set, he would scat along to the playback and it would always be musically acceptable. Bing would often sit in the choir loft at The Good Shepherd Church in order to avoid attention and Tony remembers his always being genial on such occasions.

Tony is the one marked with an arrow.

Turning to *White Christmas* specifically, Tony said that by the time the choir was hired to work on the film, he had done so many movies, recordings and television shows, and had seen Bing Crosby almost every Sunday when they sang at his church, it was simply regarded as just another movie. However, Tony, as an adolescent boy, was particularly pleased when he realized he was going to be working "with those beautiful gals Rosemary and Vera." The boys from the choir spent three days working on the film, one day on the soundstage and two days filming the finale. The older members of the choir were left out of the filming as they were too tall and the remaining choir members plus several child actors all lip synched to the recording of the choir's voices. Tony remembered being measured for the costumes which were designed to be seen only from the front – there were pins in the back. Bob Mitchell wouldn't even let the boys sit down during breaks in the actual filming for fear they would wrinkle the costumes. Tony is one of ten boys in that final scene and he remembers that there

were problems with the tracking of one of the cameras. He recalls playing with the artificial snow too.

The Mitchell Boys Choir voices were the young voices on the recording of the song alongside those of the four principals (Trudy Stevens provided the voice for Vera-Ellen). Tony said that the choir was very well prepared and disciplined on the sound stage. The boys were not allowed to ask for autographs or to have photographs taken with the stars although, by chance, Tony did have a photo taken with Rosemary Clooney. Tony said that "in rehearsals and at costume fittings the production assistants were going crazy with all of the unpreparedness, fits and egos of the other child actors and dancers, who acted like they were the stars of the film." The little ballerina kept performing the scene in her own way but this was not how the Director wanted it done.

Tony remembers that Danny Kaye was always trying to keep everyone on the set relaxed especially during a "tantrum" by the little ballerina, by impersonating her, usually behind her back but where the rest of the boys could see him and laugh to themselves.

Kathy queried whether the film had an impact on Tony and his career but he said doing the movie was just another day at the office. Even though his family was happy that they could tell all of their friends that he was in the movie, most of the choirboys had by then been in so many movies it was "old hat" to them. He did not see the film until some years later but when he sees the movie now he gets a good feeling remembering the camaraderie of Bing, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney and Vera-Ellen and how nice they all treated the little choirboys.

Rosemary Clooney

Naturally, Kathy asked whether Tony knew anything about Rosemary Clooney before he went to work on *White Christmas*. Tony said that he and his whole family were aware of her singing, and were very excited that he was going to be in a movie with her. His three older sisters who were teenagers at that time, all sang fairly well, and were big fans of hers. Tony felt that it was her sweet tone that came through and made the listener feel that she was sincere in what she was singing about. He did have occasion to meet Rosemary again years later when as member of The Lettermen they were singing at a fundraiser in Beverly Hills. He met her backstage and he told her that he was one of the Mitchell Choirboys in the *White Christmas* movie. He didn't expect her to remember him because he was at that time just one of the cute little boys, and now he looked completely different. He reminded her that she had come over to the boys during one of the breaks in the shooting and the soundstage camera man took a photo of all of them with her. Tony told Rosemary that he still had a copy of it. She in a kidding way said to him "please don't show that photograph to any one showing that you were such a youngster, because then people will know just how much older I am than you."

Tony said that Rosemary was ever kind, caring and gracious and always a lady. Anyone could tell that she was respected by all of the stars in that movie, especially by Bing Crosby.

****

Tony Butala's tenure with the choir ended after he became an adolescent, but Bob Mitchell, seeing promise in him, retained him as assistant choir director and paid for his private education as he continued his show business career. As a teenager, Tony sang with a quartet called "The Fourmost", which included Concetta Ingolia, who would later become known by her stage name, Connie Stevens. Though the group would later disband, for Tony, it would lay the foundation of what would become known as **The Lettermen**. Tony was a founder member of the latter group and they went on to have 16 Top 10 singles including one #1, 32 consecutive Billboard Magazine chart albums, 11 gold records in the USA, Canada and Mexico (18 gold records worldwide), and five Grammy nominations.

Tony Butala is the man on the right.

The Lettermen never officially worked with Bing although they did appear on an informal bill with him at a Heart Fund function at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills where Bing got up and sang an impromptu song using the group's piano player. Bing was amused when after the show Tony told him that the first Lettermen date was impersonating him and The Rhythm Boys with Paul Whiteman and his orchestra at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas NV.

A later member of The Lettermen was Donovan Tea who used to be in a group in Los Angeles called the Young Americans which appeared with Bing on his 1975 Christmas Special for NBC. Tony told Kathy Brown that

Donovan has nothing but good things to say about how Bing treated all of the kids in that group.

Our special thanks to Kathy Brown for making her material available to us.

Just Like the Ones You Used to Know

The *New York Times* of December 22 carried a thoughtful article by Dave Kehr about the new DVD releases reviewed by Ken Crossland in our last issue.

Bing Crosby died in 1977, but that can seem hard to believe during the holiday season. This great singer — one of the principal architects of American pop and very likely the most successful entertainer of the 20th century — lives on during the four weeks from Thanksgiving to Christmas.

Crooning "White Christmas," "Jingle Bells" or "Silent Night," his comforting and congenial bass-baritone voice follows us through shopping malls, rides with us in elevators and skips ahead of us from radio to radio as we walk down the street, his warm tone and flawless phrasing sliding into our subconscious. But Crosby was also a major movie star whose vehicles consistently placed among the highest grossing films of the year in the 1930s and early '40s. His portrayal of the singing priest in Leo McCarey's 1944 *Going My Way* earned him an Oscar as best actor and status as the industry's leading box office draw, which he kept for the rest of the decade.

The easy intimacy and casual charm that he cultivated as a vocalist carried over into his acting, turning this unlikely physical specimen — he was short and slightly tubby, with a receding hairline and flapping, famously untamable ears — into an irresistible screen presence, appealing equally to men and women. He seemed like someone you had always known: straightforward, dependable, fun to be around.

Crosby spent the vast majority of his career at Paramount, working repeatedly with a small group of collaborators: the directors Frank Tuttle, David Butler and Wesley Ruggles; the screenwriters Frank Butler and Claude Binyon; the composer and musical director Victor Young; the cinematographer Karl Struss.

Universal, the studio that owns the pre-1948 Paramount catalog, has released two sets of Crosby vehicles, "Bing Crosby: Screen Legend" and, most recently, "The Bing Crosby Collection," both with an emphasis on the formative years of his career. The challenge at this point was to find an acceptably romantic, mainstream image for Crosby, who was still an unruly young jazz singer, not adverse to taking a drink and with personal habits and musical tastes that might not have pleased middle America.

Oddly, both sets omit Crosby's first starring vehicle, *The Big Broadcast*, an ingenious 1932 film created by Tuttle as a homage to the free-form comedies René Clair was making in France. As a character named Bing Crosby he plays a worst-case version of the callow young performer he was, a dissipated radio star whose drinking makes him perpetually late for his broadcasts. By the climax, however, this more-or-less accurate portrait of Crosby is revealed as a pose, a ruse adapted to facilitate a love affair between the supporting players Stuart Erwin and Leila Hyams. By sympathetic magic Crosby's youthful discretions are made to disappear.

"The Bing Crosby Collection" begins instead with *College Humor*, a leering pre-Code farce directed rather heavy-handedly by Ruggles (fresh from winning an Oscar for the leaden prestige western *Cimarron*) that defensively places Crosby above the action as a college music professor drawn into the sexual escapades of his students. He is better integrated into Norman Taurog's 1934 *We're Not Dressing*, yet another version of James M. Barrie's play "The Admirable Crichton" with Crosby as a sailor who tames a spoiled heiress (Carole Lombard, at the beginning of her career as a comedienne) when they are shipwrecked on a not-quite-deserted island (George Burns and Gracie Allen have already taken up residence).

Here Is My Heart returns to the autobiographical motif with Crosby as a radio crooner who poses as a servant to romance an impoverished Russian princess (Kitty Carlisle). The 1935 *Mississippi*, directed by A. Edward Sutherland, finds Crosby stepping into a purely romantic role originally intended for the tenor Lanny Ross. Looking uncomfortable in mutton chops and period clothes in this tale of the Old South, Crosby cedes the film to his co-star W. C. Fields, who wobbles through it as a showboat captain. Though these films don't stand out today, they all proved popular with contemporary audiences and yielded a steady string of hit songs for Crosby, including "June in January" and "It's Easy to Remember."

Crosby's dramatic breakthrough occurred in *Pennies from Heaven* (1936), an independent production released through Columbia (a 2003 DVD is long out of print), but evidence of a new gravity is on display in Ruggles's 1938 *Sing You Sinners*. No longer just a sleepy-eyed charmer, Crosby allows some darker traits to emerge as one of three singing brothers (flanked by a stern Fred MacMurray and an energetic, adolescent Donald O'Connor) whose dreamy irresponsibility nearly puts his family on the street.

It would take another six years and the incomparably astute direction of Leo McCarey to bring out the full register of Crosby's mature screen personality in *Going My Way* and its more emotionally shaded sequel *The Bells of St. Mary's* (released in 1945, but conceived before *Going My Way*). The final film in the Universal set reflects both Crosby's increased stature and Paramount's reluctance to let go of a good thing: *Welcome Stranger* (1947), directed by Elliott Nugent, reteams Crosby with the elfin Irish character actor Barry Fitzgerald, not as priests this time but as doctors in a small New England town (thus in effect allowing Crosby's Father O'Malley-type character to get the girl — in this case, Joan Caulfield).

The postwar Crosby is a fascinating figure; in a way he's the upbeat, gently sentimental antidote to the doomed heroes of the films noirs then filling American screens. Like those noir heroes Crosby's character is frequently a returning veteran experiencing problems settling down. The drifter's nonchalance, once a central element of his charm, has mutated into a lonely detachment; he has seen too much to drop effortlessly back into civilian life. But unlike the doomed noir figures who allow themselves to fall off the edge, Crosby's characters are saved by an innate musicality that eventually allows them to reconnect with the community they left behind.

Such is the subtext of *White Christmas*, the 1954 film that proved to be Crosby's biggest box-office success. The first film made in Paramount's revolutionary widescreen process VistaVision, it has just been given an eye-popping release on Blu-ray by Paramount Home Entertainment based on the original VistaVision material.

White Christmas has long been seen as a follow-up to *Holiday Inn*, the 1942 Irving Berlin musical that first matched Crosby with the song that would yield the best-selling single of all time. (Originally *White Christmas* was meant to reunite Crosby with Fred Astaire, his *Holiday Inn* co-star, but the part eventually went to Danny Kaye.)

But as a film *White Christmas* is also a continuation and resolution of *This Is the Army*, Berlin's morale-boosting wartime revue, which was made into a movie in 1943. Both films were directed by Michael Curtiz, who begins *White Christmas* much where *This Is the Army* left off: with fighting men on the European front, being entertained by a performer on a makeshift stage. It's Christmas Eve, bombs are falling in the (soundstage) background, and Bing Crosby is singing "White Christmas," just as he did in countless U.S.O. shows during the war.

In a way we're back to *The Big Broadcast*, with Crosby playing a fictional version of himself. But this is an older, more isolated Crosby, enveloped in an air of sadness. (Crosby's troubled wife, the actress Dixie Lee, had died a few months before shooting began.) The film follows his character, Bob Wallace, back to civilian life, in which his younger performing partner Phil Davis (Kaye) tries to find a cure for Bob's melancholia by fixing him up with a singer (the eminently suitable Rosemary Clooney).

But for the romance to flourish, the trauma of war must be confronted and conjured away. Bob and Phil encounter their former commander (Dean Jagger), a major general who has fallen on hard times, and use their star power to transform his broken down Vermont inn into a successful winter resort.

This they accomplish by staging a holiday reunion of all the men who served under Jagger — an occasion for a reprise of the opening sequence, though this time with "White Christmas" performed as a group number, before a community of veterans reunited with their families. Instead of bombs falling from the studio sky, there is a gentle dusting of artificial snow, uniting a generation under a blanket of forgiveness, forgetfulness and peace. Years after the armistice, the war, for these men, is finally over. *(The Bing Crosby Collection, Universal, $49.98; White Christmas, Paramount, Blu-ray $29.99, DVD $24.99, not rated)*

Dave Kehr

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Michael Collins, by email from Florida, USA

This is probably all old hat to you, but it is new to me. Recently I happened to pick up a VHS at a local library sale, a copy of *Dash and Lilly* which chronicles the long and celebrated affair between Dashiell Hammett (Sam Shepard) and Lillian Hellman (Judy Davis). Very early in the movie, a flashback from the McCarthy Trials, the scene moves to the Blossom Room of the Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood. The year is 1930 and the singer who has just been introduced is Bing Crosby singing "I Surrender Dear".

As he croons the opening verse, Hammett and Hellman move up to the bar. The famous detective writer seems unimpressed: "I'm allergic to baritones myself."

"That makes two of us", chimes in Hellman, whereupon they both drift outside.

The actor who played the part of Bing is a Canadian named Alex Fallis. Apparently, he comes from Toronto and also happens to be a singer with operatic connections. One could say that he is a sort of upper register Michael Holliday - almost, if not quite, yet convincing enough to fool 99% of the population. To be honest, he fooled me and I had to check carefully at the end of the reel to make sure that he was not dubbing Bing's voice. The visual was a long shot, just out of focus, but also convincing as far as it went. Of course, I later played the vocals back a few times and decided that it was a very good imitation.

This was an A & E original movie (1999) and, because it did not have an official "theater release", - as Americans say - it probably would not be included in Bert Bishop's comprehensive list anyway as it deals with Bing's voice on film, not a clever impersonation thereof.

Worth viewing, if you have not already seen it.

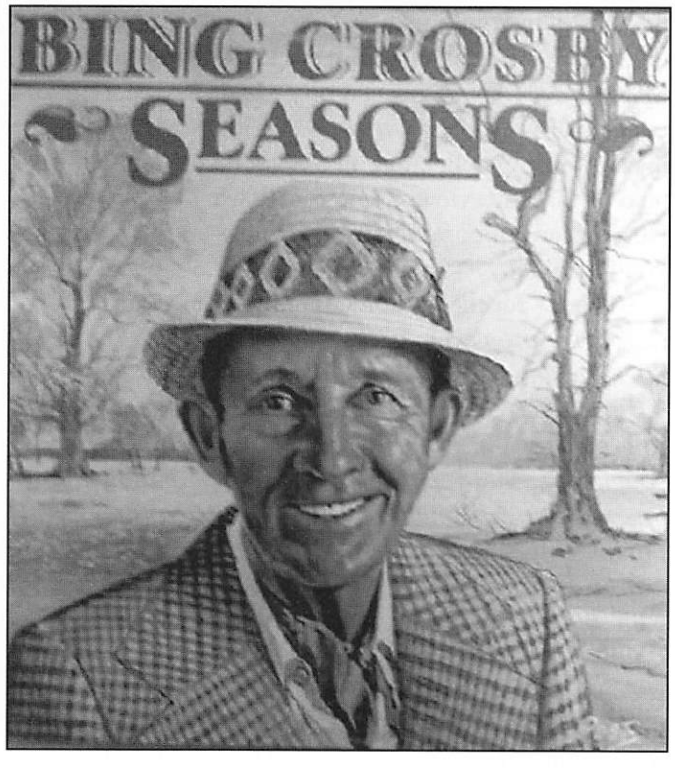
Aaron Tickner, by email from Brisbane, Australia

I have been a devoted reader of the BING magazine since 1992 and must say that I have always been so impressed with the quality of the magazine throughout these years. Well done to all who contribute to its high standard.

As for me I'm Brisbane born and bred. I'm 35, married with two children and work as an instrumental music teacher (brass/woodwind & percussion instruments) in our Queensland education system. I have been a Bing collector since I was 13. I had a friend called Les O'Donnell who was a member of the ICC as well as the (no longer around) Queensland Bing Crosby Society. I was introduced to Les by his niece, a school friend of mine. She said she would introduce me to her uncle if I would stop talking about Bing at school.

I thought I might share with you something I have discovered (it may be old news to you) but I have never seen it before. About 2 years ago I was in a second hand record store in Brisbane searching for ... well you know how it is ... anything that took my fancy ... anything rare ... anything I don't already have but have always desired to have in my collection. Anyway, I discovered an issue of "Seasons" that I had never seen before. However, I didn't buy it at the time because I had found a heap of other records that I wanted to purchase. I have returned to the shop several times and low and behold it has still been among the Bing stack. So in February of this year I purchased it. It still bears the Polydor label. However, to the left of this logo is the Reader's Digest logo. Unlike the usual issue it is only a single sleeve and does not fold out. It has entirely different liner notes on the reverse side.

The two most curious things about this release however are: firstly the cover and secondly the track listing. The cover is a painting of Bing by an artist named Post. It is a duplicate of the original photo. Why, I'll never know? I have attached a copy of this for you to see. The tracks are in the same running order except for the fact that "In the Good Old Summertime" has been brought forward as the last track on side A. Thus side A has seven tracks and side B only five. Do you know of this release and why Reader's Digest would make such pointless and expensive changes?



The Reader's Digest issue was printed in the UK and bears the number of RDS9170. Curiously the original issue I have was printed in Australia (I assume from a master made available from the UK) and was distributed in Australia by Phonogram Pty. Limited. I used to have a copy of the album on compact cassette. I remember that this version (with the old familiar photo) was released by Rainbow. While I have been typing I have been listening to the Reader's Digest issue for the first time. It could be my imagination but Bing's voice seems a little more forward in this pressing. Certainly the backing vocals are not as bright.

I noticed in the latest issue of BING more references to Bing's loose change. I have found some more examples - "The Littlest Angel" from the 1962 Christmas album. From memory it happens during the backing vocals singing the chorus. Bing is tacet at this point (apart from some unwritten extra percussion parts that Bing adds). I discovered this while listening with headphones.

After reading the Bing n' Bowie article, I happened to look at the clip on youtube. Of course I've got it on video and DVD but took a quicker way out as I was sitting in front of the computer. After Bing shakes hands with Bowie he drops his hand back down onto his thigh - coins a-jingling! They move over to the piano and the next thing I notice Bing has a band-aid on his index finger. Make-up artist's day-off by chance? Or did Bing rebuke the make-up person and say, "What? Cover up the band-aid with make-up? Next you'll be wanting to stick my ears back, I bet!"

Perhaps headphones and sitting close to computer screens gives us too much detail sometimes. I wonder if the Argos ad picked up on the detail of the band aid and included it?

Lastly in your book, "A Diary of a Lifetime" you list on 16th June 1969 that Bing was interviewed for the Melbourne 3AW radio station. About ten years ago a collector I was friends with passed away and he left me his entire Bing collection. In among the collection was a tape of that interview. Some time back I burnt it to CD. Do you have a copy of this interview and if not would you like a copy?

Thanks for the great reading over the years.

(Editor: Aaron kindly sent me a CD of the 1969 interview in which Norman Banks interviews Bing. That particular day our Mr. Crosby had flown down to Los Angeles from his home near San Francisco, filmed a couple of scenes for the Goldilocks film and then flown back to do the interview with Norman. Bing gently promotes the "Hey Jude" album during the interview. Aaron also sent another CD containing an interview with Bing done by an Australian broadcaster called Philip Brady. This was when Bing had just started his sitcom series. In addition on the CD was a conversation between Lucille Ball and Bing in which Lucy quizzes Bing about this sitcom series. My grateful thanks to Aaron for these interesting items.)

Mark Scrimger, Battle Creek, Michigan, USA

...I enclose a picture of Bing and UK singer Lonnie Donegan which my son ran across on a Lonnie Donegan website. Could you ask some of the followers if they know anything about this encounter? What was the occasion, what gold records are they holding, the date, etc? I can't make out the label names on the copy so I can't name the record or record company. My son and I would be really interested to know.

A proud moment when Lonnie receives his first two Gold Discs from Bing Crosby.

(Editor: I discovered this event when I was researching my book "Bing Crosby: Day by Day" but all I had was an undated press cutting. I managed to narrow it down to October 1961 but in view of Mark's enquiry I contacted Donegan's biographer Spencer Leigh. He directed me to Carl Jones who was in effect Lonnie's manager in his later years. Carl recalled that Lonnie was always proud of having Bing present him with the gold records. Carl provided me with a higher definition photo which is shown above and the record on the left is on the Pye label and is for "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour" which had already been a hit in the UK and had recently reached No. 5 in the Billboard charts in the USA. The record on the right was "Rock Island Line" which had been a massive hit in 1956 on both sides of the Atlantic and was on a Decca label.)

Alex Schicke, by email from Germany.

May I congratulate you on another fantastic issue. Congratulations also on your 75th anniversary, your society is three times older than me! I especially enjoyed the record reviews from Ken Crossland and he summed up the new records quite well. I love the Crosby-Clooney duets because you can really feel the love which they had for each other on those radio tracks. I have many records from Rosemary and I am looking forward to reading your new book about her career. Richard Baker also had interesting information about the Bing "Great Country Songs" album. In my opinion it is not one of Bing's best record efforts, because the arrangements are quite overloaded with guitar and the silly choir. I prefer his older country records from the 30s.

By the way I recently heard his fantastic "St. Louis Blues" with the great Duke Ellington Orchestra. Wonderful! Looking forward to the new Sepia and Kraft CDs. Sadly, the Sepia series will soon reach its end.
(Editor: Yes, the end of the Sepia series is indeed in sight. Vol. 8 is advertised with this issue and we shall probably then have two more volumes which will see us through until the end of Bing's Decca contract. We shall omit the four radio tracks with Buddy Cole which were issued by Decca in this period as they are already available on the wonderful Mosaic set.)

Keith Parkinson, Eccleston, St. Helens, UK
I'm always struck by the objective way in which BING covers Crosby's performances. The "Thoroughly Modern Bing" and "Hey Jude, Hey Bing" albums are honestly re-appraised and Ken's "Keeping Track" always provides a fair assessment of CDs and DVDs. It's probably the only music magazine dedicated to one singer which puts honesty before hero worship. Issue 157 maintained the tradition of telling it as it is.

Ken Barnes, by email from Essex, UK
My congratulations to you Greg and Malcolm - and to everyone connected with the 75th Anniversary edition of BING. While the magazine is well up to its usual high standard, there is a sense of occasion with this latest edition and, of course, a distinction that no other such club or society can claim. Keep up the good work and every good wish for the future.
(Editor: Thanks, Ken, and congratulations to you too on your election as Hon. President of the Sinatra Music Society)

Norman Wolfe, by email from Cumming, Georgia, USA
I had a chance to go through the magazine last evening. Congratulations on an edition befitting the occasion. We must now be the Victoria of fan clubs and I have told you my feeling that your efforts give us the flag around which to rally. When I think of all the guys I liked so much over the years, Machliss, Taylor, Lundberg, Twiss to name a few who have gone, I have no trouble realizing how many years have passed.

I know you wallow in specifics so here are a few observations at random.

- I liked the front cover but was not so keen on the back. I guess I just don't like pictures of him in which he looks like father time (alas, too many of us do now)
- I think the photos of the writers, with their articles, are a nice touch
- The decline in membership is distressing but not surprising. One of the reasons you don't touch on is that interest often dwindles with age. I find it to be the case with me. I am no longer the zealot I once was. I used to make the "definitive" Crosby tape every other day, it seemed. I haven't made one in years despite all the stuff now available which I don't have and always wanted. And I have yet to make my own "definitive" CD or buy any of the movies now on DVD. A few years ago, I would have killed for them. My idea of a burning question was whether he sang better in *Waikiki Wedding* or *Pennies from Heaven*. Is there anything better on film than "And So Do I." Don't misunderstand me—I play my tapes at home and in the car about the same as always, but I construct nothing new.
- I find the articles which interest me are the ones which tell me things I don't know. The articles about promoting him and where and when his music and films pop up are fine, I guess but I'll leave these to others. Jimmy Bowen's reminiscences were fascinating. I always wondered who came up with the idea for that 'Hey Jude' cover. It is my all time favorite and Crosby looks great. The 'Hey Jude' side is dreadful though – a bad vocal augmented by a horrible arrangement.
- I knew Glen Campbell was in the band for the country album but never knew David Gates was too. Gates' music always intrigues me—lovely melodies with lyrics which make no sense whatever. "If" is a good example or try "Aubrey was her name" (Como sings both very well, incidentally). As for Gates as a vocalist, only dogs can hear him. Crosby sings very well on the country album but is nasal on some tracks and that ruins it.

(Editor: I always enjoy Norman's slightly tongue-in-cheek contributions but he makes a serious point about how interest in a subject may dwindle with age. It's very true but we'll do our best to keep finding new information about our Mr. Crosby.)

Roger Schore, by email from New York, USA
Knowing how much material you and Malcolm must receive, I really didn't expect the "Hey Jude, Hey Bing!" articles or my letter to get printed so it was a real kick to see it all in the new issue. Thank you.

I just finished reading the magazine and as usual, it was great fun. I especially enjoyed reading about the Paley Center tribute and Bing's USO activities which no doubt, could be a book in and of itself.

I hope the Argentina special does become available and how terrific if Robert Bader can get the two 1955 and 1956 benefit shows issued. As many have remarked, these are heady times for Bing fans.

Thanks again, Greg, for helping to put together a wonderful magazine.

Graham Pascoe, by email from Bathurst, NSW, Australia
Another interesting issue of BING (No. 157) has reached me. Congratulations to all involved.

I look forward to reading the next part of the Club Crosby 75th anniversary story from Greg Van Beek. The first Crosby fan clubs were started in Australia in 1945 and the Aussie branch of Club Crosby was formed twelve years after the US club with Barbara Doggett of Sydney as president. Annual membership cost the grand

sum of seven shillings and six pence. Barbara arranged for each issue of BINGANG which came from USA to be retyped and reproduced, with an additional Australian Branch section, and distributed to members. By 1951 the branch had New Zealand members and was known as the Southern Cross Branch. Throughout the 1950s members contributed to a fund to purchase Christmas presents for Bing, such as a pipe with a steer's head bowl and a kangaroo-skin tobacco pouch. The branch continued until the late 1950s. A few years ago Barbara told me that the branch membership numbered 148.

I always enjoy Keith Parkinson's contributions and his *High Society* story reminded me that it was first screened in Australia on 19 September 1956. Television had just 'arrived' in Sydney. The film's season of twenty-four weeks was at the Liberty theatre, a small (658 seats) cinema which had not shown a Crosby film before. Its first run in Melbourne was unusual in that it opened at two central city cinemas simultaneously. In Sydney, *The Sun-Herald* reviewer was not impressed, writing 'Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra seem pretty negative'. However, the critic in Melbourne's *The Herald* thought the film was 'a winner...Crosby is his relaxed self.' The same month in which it opened in Sydney included an article in a local music magazine, *Tempo*, which remarkably stated that 'Grace Kelly would be heard singing a solo ("Your sensational"), a duet with Crosby ("Mind if I make love to you?"), a duet with Sinatra ("True love")'. That version of the film must surely be a collector's item!

John Newton, by email from Wilmington, Delaware, USA

I have *really* enjoyed the work that went into the special Kraft CD (75th Anniversary). It's marvelous.

I seem to recall reading that someone was wondering about the provenance of the air-check(s) for Bing's first Kraft appearance on December 5, 1935 — the medley and the two separate songs.

I've attached a label copy of the original disc that holds the air-check of December 5, 1935.

The company that recorded this Bing material directly off the air was the ELECTRO-VOX company. ... Electro-Vox, Inc. was located in the Bendix Building, 1206 Maple Ave., Los Angeles. This company provided professional off-air recording services, as well as custom recording services, to whoever might engage them to do so. This would primarily be people "in the trade" who had special interests in whatever was being broadcast, i.e. songwriters, band-leaders, broadcast sponsors, and performers who wanted to have an actual "record" of a performance. Who specifically wanted this Bing material is a fact lost in the mists of time, but we can be grateful that it was done at the time and it has caused these wonderful performances to survive.

Off-air recordings by Electro-Vox were initially done on un-coated aluminum discs, with the grooves cut directly into the metal. This was the way the industry initially produced such air-checks. The discs were *supposed* to be played with cactus or fibre or wooden needles, since metal on metal would damage the grooves. Unfortunately, this didn't always happen and the use of regular steel needles caused damage resulting in often poor quality on discs that have survived (e.g. some of the Cremo material extant). By the time that this first Kraft appearance by Bing occurred, the process of recording such "instantaneous" records had improved by the use of "acetate" material being applied as a coating to the aluminum disc, with the grooves being cut into the coating material. This produced a smoother and often clearer recording surface and playback was greatly improved as well. Steel needles would still do damage, but lighter tone-arms were being manufactured by this time and this helped save many acetate-based recordings for future enjoyment.

Interestingly, the original disc containing Bing's December 5, 1935 Kraft segments (lacking only "Without a Word of Warning") is coated in a bright blue colored acetate material, and both sides were recorded at 33-1/3 rpm. This is interesting because very few of the general public would have had the expensive equipment necessary to play 33-1/3 recordings at that time, The first side contains the very beginning of the program, broadcast from New York, up to the point where the Whiteman Orchestra begins to play a medley of songs made famous by Bing. Unfortunately, most of this is lost because after only a few seconds of the band playing "Mississippi Mud", the recording goes silent until Paul Whiteman re-appears to introduce Bing, whose contributions to the program were being relayed from Hollywood.

Bing then greets the audience and has some dialogue with Jimmy Dorsey before beginning his medley. The reverse of the disc contains contains "Red Sails in the Sunset", followed by "On Treasure Island". The very beginning of the disc begins with Paul Whiteman again introducing Bing, who follows with a spoken introduction to "Red Sails in the Sunset". Bing sings the

verse, up to the line ".. I heard a fishergirl singing", but the recording is extremely faint and very difficult to hear. At this point the grooves go silent for approximately 21 seconds, picking up again at "... home safely to me", loud and clear. The recording technician obviously had difficulties at the start of the second side of the disc, and only fixed his problem well into the song (a situation resolved on the CD by magnificent editing, combining the beginning of Bing's commercial recording with the well-recorded remainder of the song).

I've owned this Electro-Vox disc for a number of years now, since it came to me from a friend on the West Coast, near Hollywood. I've always considered it to be one of the finest examples of Bing's earlier radio work. *(Editor: There are still some of the Kraft CDs left but don't delay if you want one.)*

The Official Home Of Bing Crosby

This can be found on the Internet at http://bingcrosby.com/bing/ and in recent months the site has been substantially improved. Richard Baker gives details.

When the idea for a short item in the magazine about the "new look" website which was launched by Bing Crosby Enterprises in May was mooted, I posted a request on the Crosby Fan World site asking for comments. I received several - but all by email rather than posts on the site. All had some minor criticisms, and that is possibly the reason for keeping to emails. So let me dispose of them first, because they are really matters that I would regard as 'fine tuning' or constructive suggestions.

One person said that he found it frustrating that the stream alters with migration between screens. The thought is offered that it is annoying to hear a snippet of a song only to have it cut off immediately you click onto a menu item. Far better, it is suggested, to have a single stream, or at least not a change between each and every screen.

Secondly, the audio and video content at the site is in the form of live streams, which require a reasonably fast connection to work effectively. Apparently the stream fed over an inadequate connection slows the whole connection down to an unacceptable crawl with many interruptions. I am told that it just 'jams up'. It is suggested that an option to switch the stream off would help those who lack fast connections in order that they can more easily enjoy everything else on offer.

Thirdly, and this was from several sources – the scrolling script for the audio titles is too small, as are the little 'boxed' titles in the media vault page, which it is suggested, are not adequately informative in some cases anyway.

On the wholly positive side, it was agreed that the site is a clear improvement over the old version.

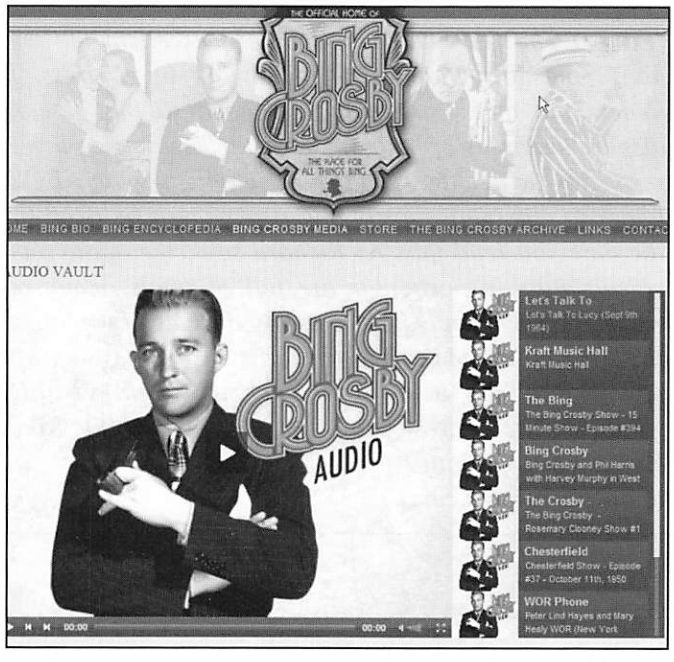
The 'Home' page is clear and uncluttered.

Next there is a 'Bio' page with a piece by Gary Giddins running to over 1000 words with a couple of photos.

Now we get to the real meat. The next offering is 'Bing Encyclopedia' with a number of sub pages – Entertainer – Sportsman – Entrepreneur – Innovator – Philanthropist – The Crosby Family.

The first of these – 'The Entertainer' has four further sub pages – The (Recording) (Radio) (Film) (Television) - Star. All of these have relevant information and a good selection of pictures most of which are new to me. The pictures can be seen in enlarged form by clicking on them and scrolling through as in an album.

Then we have an equally or even more interesting selection – 'Bing Crosby Media' – subdivided 'Video Vault – Photo Gallery – Audio Vault'. When I did my detailed exploration I counted 17 video items, ranging from a Minute Maid commercial, a couple of golfing items and some public service clips, 'Bridge over Troubled Water' from *The Pearl Bailey Show* and others. A nice touch here – start on the first and you progress seamlessly through them all. But, yes, I did find the boxed titles rather small and inadequately informative. A further suggestion – I don't know if it is intended to change the content, but assuming that is the intention, possibly a statement of how long the present offering might stay, or intended date of change?



In the 'Audio Vault' there are similar treats presented in the same way and the same comments apply. Here we currently have one of each KMH, Philco and Chesterfield shows (the former not dated – it is from 30th November 1944), and a *Stars for Defense* Programme, plus some of the short shows and a couple of interviews, a total of nine items.

The Photo Gallery has a fascinating variety of images – Advertisements, Album covers, Sheet Music,

Posters, Magazines and Crosbyana. A very good browse here with each image enlarged on a click though I would have wished for more information on some items.

Finally there is a page for the Bing Crosby Store (which I don't think has changed) and another for the Bing Crosby Archive – showing all the recent DVD and CD releases with 'Buy' options linking to Amazon (US). A depressing sign of the times here – when I clicked through, some items were out of stock with no certain delivery promises.

Finally there is 'Link' page with ten links, including the Bing Crosby Facebook and Twitter pages, the Sinatra and Rosemary Clooney websites, Mosaic and TCM

The audio streams are accompanied by the title of the current song, and play in most screens apart from the Audio and Video vaults, which have their own menus to select individual items.

All in all a very satisfying site which is a vast improvement on the old one, with a lot of browsing potential, though it does have some mildly annoying features, and I agree with my correspondent who does not like the change in audio stream with migration between pages. There are some parts that are clearly likely to be developed further – the 'Album Covers' and 'Crosbyana' pages are very light on images at present, but there is much else that is very good indeed.

Richard Baker

(Editor: The new web site is indeed excellent but we must remember that it is still a work in progress. I understand that it is being developed so that it can display hundreds of hours of content. The music player restarting with page changes is a glitch which BCE hopes to eliminate shortly and it may even be fixed by the time you read this. As Richard says, the audio and video vaults in particular are full of treats, many of which are completely new to us. By the way, if you open the site and minimize it you can listen to free Bing all day long while using your computer and visiting whatever web sites you like! Any comments and suggestions about the site can be sent to info@bingcrosby.com)

Mildred Bailey

As we know, Mildred played an important part in Bing's early career. Member Croft O'Toole of Foster, Rhode Island sent in an interesting article about her which originally appeared in the *Indian Country Today* magazine in May 2009. With the passage of time, some of the events mentioned are no longer current of course.

In 1929, a Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Indian vocalist joined Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra to become the breakthrough big-band "girl singer" who opened doors for many who followed.

Mildred Bailey's crystal-clear voice rang out from bandstands and radios everywhere in the '30s and '40s. Known as "Mrs. Swing," she topped the charts three times between 1938 and 1940. Among her many hits were "Rocking Chair," "Says My Heart" and "Darn that Dream," the latter recorded with Benny Goodman and his orchestra.

Bailey died of a heart attack in 1951, and until recently, her music was largely forgotten.

Now Julia Keefe, a young jazz singer from the Nez Perce Tribe, is among those reviving Bailey's repertoire. On April 11, Keefe debuted a program titled "Thoroughly Modern: Mildred Bailey Songs" in a performance at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. The Rasmuson Theater was standing room only when Keefe and the Jerrol Pennerman Octet took the stage.

"Mildred Bailey made each song her own, emoting them in ways that other people didn't," said Keefe, 19, a student at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music. "She didn't have sheet music, so she memorized from recordings. If she couldn't remember a note, she improvised it."

Mildred at work

Keefe, who grew up in Kamiah, Idaho, on the Nez Perce Reservation, and in Spokane, Wash., has been singing professionally since age 15. In 2007, she won the outstanding vocal soloist award at the Lionel Hampton International Jazz Festival. She turned to Bailey's music as a way of "paying homage to my roots

as a female Native American jazz vocalist."

Bailey's cultural identity has long been debated by jazz aficionados. "She was an early hipster and she talked a lot of jazz slang," said Jim Price of Spokane, who is writing a biography of the singer. Bailey described herself in a recording of "St. Louis Woman" as "a little, short, fat squatty mama." Her appearance led to the occasional conjecture that she had African-American ancestry. More often she was categorized as a white artist who was influenced by her friend, the African-American blues singer Bessie Smith.

Even Bailey's age was a matter of dispute; she claimed to have been born in 1907 – which would have made her 44 at her death – but other accounts indicate her birth date may have been 1900.

"She and her brothers were about 7/16s Indian, or just under half," Price said. Bailey had an allotment on the Coeur d'Alene reservation and her family had also lived on the Spokane Indian Reservation. She grew up in Tekoa, Wash., near Spokane.

"As a girl, she was exposed to tribal music," Price said. "Her mother was a fine musician who played the piano and who also took part in tribal music."

Al Rinker (left) with Bing and Harry Barris. The three men have autographed the photo to fans.

Bailey called traditional Indian singing "a remarkable training and background" for a singer. "It takes a squeaky soprano and straightens out the clinkers that make it squeak; it removes the bass boom from the contralto's voice," she said. "This Indian singing does this because you have to sing a lot of notes to get by, and you've got to cover a lot of range."

Bailey was also noted for her sense of rhythm in her jazz phrasing, in which she emphasized the unexpected word. Her influence is strong among performers like Frank Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney and Bing Crosby. Crosby, who grew up in Spokane and sang with Bailey's brother Al Rinker in the Rhythm Boys, credited Bailey with giving him his start in the music business and later wrote that she had a heart "as big as Yankee Stadium."

"Mildred Bailey is overlooked as a pop singer and as an influence on other jazz singers," said composer Tom Molter, who arranged the music for Keefe's performance at the museum.

Since 2001, when Mosaic Records released "The Complete Columbia Recordings of Mildred Bailey," a 10-disc career retrospective, her music has enjoyed a resurgence on jazz stations and among women jazz singers. She is currently featured in an exhibition at the Iroquois Indian Museum in Howes Cave, N.Y., titled "Native Americans in the Performing Arts: From Ballet to Rock and Roll."

For Keefe, who comes from a neighboring tribe to Bailey's, the connections are deep. Keefe's family researched Bailey's lesser-known songs, like "Bluebirds in the Moonlight," which Keefe wants to make her own. Hear Keefe perform "Rocking Chair," written for Bailey by Hoagy Carmichael at www.juliakeefe.com/

At first, Molter wanted to put a more modern take on the tunes for Keefe. But they settled on the original arrangements, which he transcribed from recordings by the likes of Goodman. The effect is that of the 1920s and '30s pre-swing era – but then, Bailey was swinging ahead of her time.

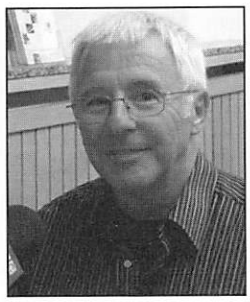
Keefe hopes to spread the jazz world's resurgent interest in Bailey to Native circles through her recent performance at NMAI.

"I put these songs together to make sure people don't forget about Mildred Bailey."

Kara Briggs

(Editor: For more background about Mildred's involvement with Bing's early career, see Gary Giddins' wonderful book about Bing, page 120 onwards. Al Rinker was also supposed to have been born in 1907 which must cast doubt on Mildred's claim to have been born that year too. See www.juliakeefe.com for more information about Miss Keefe.)

BING ON THE BOX



Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights

USA & Canada

Plenty of Bing films on TV again.

A Connecticut Yankee	TCM
Blue Skies	TCM
Going Hollywood	TCM
Going My Way	TCM
High Society	TCM
High Time	FMC
Let's Make Love	FMC
Road to Morocco	TCM
Road to Singapore	TCM
Road to Zanzibar	TCM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM
Say One for Me	FMC

TCM put on a Crosby mini-fest on May 2 to salute Bing's birthday with no less than six films. Well done and much appreciated!

St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in Wisconsin as the PBS station showed a special called *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling: An Irish Parade of Stars*. This featured Bing singing three Irish songs which were culled from George O'Reilly's *A Little Bit of Irish*, taped in Dublin in 1966. The program has been popping up on PBS stations for the last year or so as well.

with Milo O'Shea on *A Little Bit of Irish*

USA Radio

Arne Fogel's long-running Saturday night radio program "The Bing Shift" is still heard on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, MN. and it can be heard internationally, via the KBEM-JAZZ 88 website.

Greg Van Beek continues to present his monthly nostalgia specials on WJUB 1420 AM "The Breeze" in Plymouth, WI, and these can be heard over the Net too. In March he featured featuring rare radio recordings from the 1930's to the 1950's by Judy Garland and guests, along with a complete 1946 Philco Radio Time radio show starring Bing with his guest Judy Garland.

Another show to look out for is Rich Conaty's long-running "The Big Broadcast" from New York which puts a musical spotlight on the classic sounds of the 1920s and '30s. It's heard on Sunday nights from 8pm-Midnight and you can listen again through the WFUV archives. (www.wfuv.org/audio/archive).

TV highlights - UK

The Sky Classics channel continues to show the same Bing films each month which is a good job as unfortunately there was not much seen on the other channels.

High Society	TCM
Let's Make Love	Film4
Road to Morocco	Sky Classics
Road to Singapore	Sky Classics
Road to Utopia	Sky Classics
Road to Zanzibar	Sky Classics
Son of Paleface	Sky Classics
Stagecoach	Sky Classics
The Greatest Show on Earth	Film4
The Road to Hong Kong	TCM
White Christmas	Sky Classics

UK radio

The National Presenters

Russell Davies on his BBC Radio2 show on Sunday evenings continues to include Bing frequently. On April 24, Russell announced that he was holding the spring issue of BING magazine and he congratulated us on our 75th anniversary. He went on to play a song from 1936 – "I'm an Old Cowhand" – to celebrate. Russell had clearly been looking at the web site for the magazine as he quoted from it about a forerunner to Club Crosby which was advertised in *Film Weekly* of January 18, 1935 and gave the following details:

> *Admirers of Bing Crosby may join the International Club in his support. This club is recognised by Mr. Crosby and offers facilities for outdoor sports.*

Mr. Davies could not imagine what the outdoor sports would be! However he thanked us for regularly reviewing his programme. It's a pleasure, Russell, and

long may you thrive and continue to celebrate the art, craft and inspiration of the popular song.

On May 8, Russell highlighted volume 7 of "Through the Years" which, after referring to the earlier Jonzo albums, he described as a "life long series." He selected "Liza (All the Clouds'll Roll Away) from the CD and later played "Learn to Croon" saying how useful these "Crosby miniatures" were to fill gaps in view of their short running time.

Our ubiquitous **Stan White** had been in touch with Mr. Davies and had supplied him with the ICC CD "Bing Crosby Entertains" we put out a year or two back. From this our host played the rare radio version of "Some of These Days" which must be the first time it had been heard on the wireless since 1932!

Clare Teal, who follows Russell on Sundays, occasionally fits in a Bing song amongst her Dance Band and Big Band items. On May 1, she played "Gentle on My Mind" from the Bing 'N' Basie album to recognize our man's 108th birthday. The final hour on Sunday nights is taken by **David Jacobs** and his contributions have been a little sparse this time with only "The Oldest Established" and "Incurably Romantic" being employed.

Desmond Carrington's Friday night show usually has a particular theme each time and Desmond tries to use a Crosby song where he can. On April 15, his subject was "Fruit" and "An Apple for the Teacher" was featured and then on May 20 when the subject was "En Vacances" he played "Fancy Meeting You Here" to launch the show.

On other nationally networked programmes, it was good to hear **Elaine Paige** (Radio 2, Sundays 1 p.m.) playing "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" on April 24 and she followed this with the Crosby/Hope duet "Road to Morocco" a week or two later. Barbara Windsor took over as host of Elaine's show for a short while and she played "The Spaniard That Blighted My Life" on May 15, "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" on June 12 and "Now You Has Jazz" on June 19. Barbara dated Gary Crosby in the late 1950's and met Bing in 1960 when he and Kathryn saw her in the stage show *Fings Ain't Wot They Used to Be.*

The guest on the long-running *Desert Island Discs* programme on May 8 was Molly Parkin and she requested the "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive" duet between Bing and Bette Midler culled from the Pasadena Concert TV special. Amazing that this should surface in this way!

The local presenters

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria (and on the Internet) continues to astound me with the number and variety of the Bing songs she plays on her Sunday afternoon show. Between February 3 and May 29, she used 37 Crosby tracks including no less than seven songs on May 1 to celebrate Bing's birthday. Songs such as "The Headless Horseman" and "Captain Custard" were used by Anne during the period as well as the more familiar tracks. Please help Anne to keep up her good work by sending her requests by email to anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk

Anne's colleague at BBC Radio Cumbria, **Harry King**, put on a 40-minute tribute to Bing on Easter Monday using an interview with Mary Crosby he first broadcast in 2008. Harry introduced his Crosby segment with the overture from *High Society* and then played a long medley of short extracts of Bing singing with various stars before playing the interview with Mary. Other Bing songs were then interspersed during the chat with Mary. Richard Baker writing on his Crosby Fan World site summed up Mary's comments as:

> *A nice warm picture of her father from Mary and some interesting anecdotes about 'Dallas', the stage shows with the family, (with emphasis laid on Bing's generosity in sharing the platform with his family).*

I couldn't have worded it better! Mary indicated that her mother was the drill sergeant – the tough love side of the family – whilst her dad was the one who came in later with the quiet talk which could reduce Mary to tears. She thought that Bing would like to be remembered for the decent values he represented. Her favourite songs by Bing were "True Love" and "Moonlight Becomes You" and Harry duly played parts of both of these to end a very nice portion of his show.

Harmony Nights hosted by **Bill Rennells** is heard on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet for three hours starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings. It was nice to welcome back Bill's wife Angela (the rabid Crosby fan) to the programme during May. As always Bill plays a lot of Bing thanks to regular requests from our members Trevor Wagstaff, Bert Bishop and of course Stan White. In all, 22 Crosby tracks were heard including "Everything's in Rhythm with My Heart" from the ICC's Kraft CD. Bill played the 1954 version of "I Wished on the Moon" to plug volume 7 of the "Through the Years" series (which the ICC had supplied to him) and, thanks to Trevor Wagstaff, our 75th anniversary was recognised too.

Paul Barnes hosts a big band and jazz oriented show over seven BBC local radio stations across the East of England and on the Internet at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights and we were delighted to hear that he has won a prestigious jazz award. He was named broadcaster of the year at the 2011 Parliamentary Jazz Awards on May 17. The ceremony, hosted by broadcaster Paul Gambaccini, was held at the House of Commons and attended by top names including Cleo Laine and Jamie Cullum.

In his show, "The Late Paul Barnes", Paul takes a look at the Crosby Calendar during his first broadcast of each month and in March he was somewhat distressed by our choice of "The Bells of St. Mary's" as the song of the month and he played "Aren't You Glad You're You" instead. In April, he forgot to take his calendar in but remembered that the song choice was "If You Please" and it was duly played. Paul told us that he has had some thyroid trouble and was given a dose of radioactive iodine which probably set off all the Geiger counters in Norwich.

In addition, Barnsy, as he is also known, said that using the BBC internal transfer pricing would be beyond the budget for his show, so he uses CDs and records from his own collection. This has been the case with

most BBC presenters for many years which was one of the reasons the ICC has been purchasing new Bing CDs as they come out and sending them to selected radio hosts. Paul, as he does every year, mounted a birthday tribute to Bing with an interesting mixture of songs comprising "St. Louis Blues," "I Ain't Got Nobody," "Yes, Indeed!" "Hangin' Loose" and "Mountain Greenery".

Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** features Bing frequently on his Sunday afternoon show and West Country based **David Lowe** still has his 2-hour "Swingers and Singers" show on Sunday nights at 8 p.m. This is heard on eight BBC local radio stations from Gloucestershire to the Channel Islands and of course on the Internet (look for Radio Devon). David was another presenter who played "Liza (All the Clouds'll Roll Away)" from the Sepia CD we sent him via Maggie Ryan.

Mike Carey at Radio Derby likes to play Bing regularly on his Sunday afternoon *Memorable Melodies* programme but he could do with more requests to mike.carey@bbc.co.uk. There are listen again facilities for most of the shows mentioned above.

Our own **Jim Reilly** has been presenting programmes on Angel Radio, the Hampshire based community radio station, for some years and he gave us the good news that the station has launched a Bing Crosby channel at http://bingcrosby.org.uk . This runs on a loop which is expanding each time they obtain a new programme. At the moment the loop runs for 56 hours and then starts back at the beginning. Listeners may drop into the loop in the middle of a show and currently in the loop are the following: -

"Better Known Crosby" (10 Shows) – presented by Jim Reilly.

"Lesser Known Crosby" (12 Shows) – presented by Jim Reilly.

"Bing Crosby" (28 shows on a variety of aspects) – presented by Jim Reilly.

Philco Radio Time (50 shows)

Richard Baker posted a report on the Crosby Fan World site saying:

> *"I've only been able to listen in for short samples, but what I've heard is very good indeed. Jim Reilly is doing a good job. Last night he was presenting much relatively unusual material, in good quality, from AFRS broadcasts, Kraft Music Hall and Philco Radio Time. At the time of writing this he is working through Bing performing songs from the musicals, with a concentration on Rodgers and Hammerstein."*

Angel Radio has also launched a channel called *70 Years without Al Bowlly* and Jim Reilly has been prominently featured on this too. Jim was challenged to produce a programme looking at the songs sung by both Al Bowlly and Bing and he frankly admits that he felt "outside of his comfort zone." However, by the time Jim had prepared the finished programme, he felt very differently and said "In the end I found I really enjoyed the task and now I like Al Bowlly's records much more than I did previously."

Angel Radio can be heard on digital (DAB) radio networks covering many areas in the Midlands and the South of England. Their web site is at http://angelradio.moonfruit.co.uk/

Australia

David Currington writes to tell us that Australians are currently hearing Bing every day on TV. McDonald's is running an advertisement featuring "Busy Doin' Nothing" (the nothing being the artificial additives to their hamburgers - "100% beef"). David suggest that those who aren't familiar with the track would be hard pressed identifying Bing as one of the trio singing.

Ken Boness and Lance Gardam, on behalf of the Australian Bing Crosby Society, broadcast from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Eastern FM 98.1 each Friday. Their programme is called "The Melody Lingers On with Bing Crosby & Friends" and can now be heard in many parts of Australia by satellite. It is repeated on Monday mornings at 12:30 a.m. If you would like a request played, call Lance directly (03) 9722-9981 during the show or email Ken and Lance anytime at:

themelodylingerson1@gmail.com

Cyprus

Bill Lothian, a member of the International Andy Williams Appreciation Society gave me link to a radio interview Andy Williams did on "Nicosia Calling" in April. In it, Andy talks (briefly) about recording "Swinging on a Star" with Bing. The link is shown below and hopefully will still be active when you are reading this.

http://www.cybc.com.cy/html/radio/round/Andy%20Williams%20-%20Nicosia.mp3

Malcolm Macfarlane

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Jane Russell who left us on February 28. She was born Ernestine Jane Geraldine Russell on June 21, 1921, in Bemidji, Minnesota, and the family later moved to the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles. Her mother was a lay preacher, and she encouraged the family to build a chapel in their back yard. Despite her mother's Christian preachings, young Jane had a wild side. She wrote in her 1985 autobiography, *My Paths and Detours*, that during high school she had a back-alley abortion, which may have rendered her unable to bear children.

While working as a receptionist, she was spotted by a movie agent who submitted her photos to Howard Hughes, the eccentric billionaire, and she was summoned for a screen test. Hughes put her on the path to stardom when he cast her in *The Outlaw* (1943), a film he fought with censors for nearly a decade to get into wide release, not least due to the steamy publicity stills. With her sultry look and glowing sexuality, Russell became a star before she was ever seen by a wide movie audience. The Hughes publicity mill ground out photos of the beauty in low-cut costumes and swimming costumes, and she became famous, especially as a pinup for the Armed Forces. In 1948 she starred opposite Bob Hope in the box-office hit *The Paleface*, a comedy-western in which Russell was

tough-but-sexy Calamity Jane to Hope's cowardly dentist. Although her look and her hourglass figure made her the subject of numerous nightclub jokes, unlike Marilyn Monroe, Rita Hayworth and other pin-up queens of the era, Russell was untouched by scandal in her personal life. During her Hollywood career she was married to the star American Football quarterback Bob Waterfield.

At RKO she starred in a series of potboilers such as *His Kind of Woman* (with Robert Mitchum), *Double Dynamite* (Frank Sinatra, Groucho Marx), *The Las Vegas Story* (Victor Mature) and *Macao* (Mitchum again).

Jane Russell with Bing and Bob Hope, October 2, 1951

In 1952, she had a cameo role in *Road to Bali* when she appeared from a snake-charmer's basket to walk off with Bing and Dorothy Lamour. She had worked with Bing on Bob Hope's radio show on October 2, 1951 and she guested on the first of Gary Crosby's shows when he took over his father's slot in 1954. In addition, Bing and Jane were the guests on Bob Hope's TV show on May 24, 1955.

Another notable film was *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, (1953) and she followed that up with the 1954 musical *The French Line*, which like *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* had her cavorting on an ocean liner. The film was shot in 3-D, and the promotional campaign for it proclaimed: "J.R. in 3D. Need we say more?"

In 1955, she made the sequel *Gentlemen Marry Brunettes* and starred in the Westerns *The Tall Men*, with Clark Gable, and *Foxfire*, with Jeff Chandler. But by the 1960s, her film career had faded.

For many years she served as television spokeswoman for Playtex bras, and in the 1980s she made a few guest appearances in the TV series *The Yellow Rose*. As she related in *My Path and Detours*, her life was marked by heartache. Her 24-year marriage to Waterfield ended in bitter divorce in 1968. They had adopted two boys and a girl. That year she married actor Roger Barrett; three months later he died of a heart attack. In 1978 she married developer John Peoples, and they lived in Sedona, Arizona, and later, Santa Barbara. He died in 1999 of heart failure. Over the years Russell was also beset by alcoholism. Always she was able to rebound from her troubles by relying on lessons she learned from her Bible-preaching mother.

Peter Falk, who died on June 23 aged 83, is best remembered for his portrayal of the shambling, cigar-smoking detective Columbo in the television series of the same name. Throughout the seven year long series, Falk came to share many of his alter ego's traits. Where Columbo would badger suspects unremittingly for a clue to their crimes and would waste their time with seemingly pointless questions, Falk would badger studio bosses for better quality scripts, and became notorious for his time-wasting wrangles with producers in order to win directors more shooting time.

Peter Michael Falk was born on September 16, 1927 in New York City, but was brought up in Ossining in the shadow of the infamous Sing Sing Prison. His parents owned a general store and assumed that Falk would join the business on leaving school.

"I probably would have done too, except that I lost my eye as a kid," Falk recalled, "I wanted to succeed in everything after that to prove I was as good as everyone else." At school Falk became "a straight A student" and a fervent participant in all sports, particularly baseball and basketball.

In 1946 he attended Hamilton College briefly before trying to enlist in the Marines. "I memorised the sight test," he recalled, "but they wouldn't take me, so I joined the Merchant Marines instead."

Falk trained as a cook and spent three years sailing around Europe and South America. In 1951 he enrolled at Syracuse University to study for a bachelor's degree in Political Science and went on to take a Masters in Public Administration. On graduation he began work as an efficiency expert for the budget director of Connecticut.

In 1953 Falk began to develop an interest in acting and throughout the late 1950s he appeared in numerous off-Broadway productions including *The Changeling* (1956), *The Lady's Not For Burning* and *Purple Dust* (both 1957). He made his Broadway debut as the young Joseph Stalin in *The Passion of Joseph D* (1964).

His film debut came in 1958 in *Wind Across The Everglades* and he followed it with a small role in *The Bloody Brood* (1959). In his first two years in Hollywood, Falk won considerable acclaim for both his film and television work. In 1961 he was nominated for an Academy Award for his portrayal of Abe Reles in *Murder Inc.*, a documentary-like treatment of the Mafia in the 1930s. The following year Falk was nominated for another Academy Award for his role in *A Pocketful of Miracles*. He won neither of them. Later that year he did win a less prestigious Emmy Award for the role of Aristedes Fresco in *The Price of Tomatoes*.

It was in 1964 that he was fifth billed as Guy Gisborne in his only appearance in a Crosby film *Robin and the 7 Hoods*. Between 1965 and 1966 Falk won considerable popularity in the role of the barrister

Daniel J. O'Brien in *The Trials of O'Brien*. Falk's performance as the dishevelled but brilliant lawyer brought him to the attention of producers who were looking for an actor to play Lieutenant Columbo. Bing had apparently already turned the role down on the basis that it was too big a commitment and likely to interfere with his golf. At first Falk also turned the series down. He felt that he was doing too much television and that he was becoming typecast as either a lawyer or a policeman. After much wrangling with the producers Falk finally agreed to do a pilot for the show and *Prescription; Murder* was made in 1968.

The film was a success and the first series of *Columbo* began in 1971. Columbo differed from every other police series on television in that the hero was an ordinary man, who was unfit, worried about his wife, had a pet dog and wore ill-fitting suits. The producers of the series worried that viewers would tire of a show with complex plots and little action, and repeatedly tried to introduce elements of sex and violence. Falk made himself extremely unpopular by fighting these decisions and insisting on maintaining the quality of the original scripts. However his judgement proved correct and he won four Emmys for his performance as Columbo.

Falk eventually left the series in 1977 after complaining that the quality of the scripts had deteriorated. He returned to his film career with a series of comedy roles in *The Brink's Job*, *The Cheap Detective* (both 1978) and *The In-Laws* (1979) playing both criminals and detectives.

In the early 1980s Falk's film career faltered and in 1989 Falk returned to the role of Lieutenant Columbo for one last series of films. He remained as eager to discuss production quality as he had been in the 1970s and refused to do the series unless he received the substantial fee of $600,000 per episode.

"It's not the money, it's the principle," he insisted. "I want them to know that I'm serious about the project and that I won't accept anything substandard."

Falk retained the battered raincoat and cigar which had been his trademark. He remained as shambling and preoccupied as in the earlier programmes, but critics began to complain that Falk's mannerisms had become formularised. Accusations that *Columbo* had become predictable confirmed Falk's fears, and he declined another series.

Peter Falk married Alyce Mayo in 1960. They adopted two daughters, and divorced in 1976. In 1977 Falk (then 50) married the actress Shera Danese (28), who guest-starred on the *Columbo* series on numerous occasions. She and his adopted daughters survive him.

Jackie Cooper passed away on May 3 at the age of 88. He was an actor, television director, producer and executive. At age 9, he was the youngest performer to have been nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role—an honor that he received for the film *Skippy* (1931). In one scene where he was required to cry, the director, his uncle Norman Taurog, pretended to have his dog shot off-set in order to bring on the tears - a ploy that worked. Fifty years later, Cooper entitled his 1981 autobiography *Please Don't Shoot My Dog*. *Skippy* catapulted young Cooper to super-stardom. *Our Gang* producer Hal Roach sold Jackie's contract to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in mid-1931, as he felt the youngster would have a better future in features. He began a long on-screen relationship with actor Wallace Beery in such films as *The Champ* (1931), *The Bowery* (1933), *The Choices of Andy Purcell* (1933), *Treasure Island* (1934), and *O'Shaughnessy's Boy* (1935). Not conventionally handsome as he approached adulthood, Cooper had the typical child-actor problems finding roles as an adolescent, and he served in the US Navy during World War II, so his career was at a nadir when he starred in two popular television sitcoms, NBC's *The People's Choice* with Patricia Breslin and CBS's *Hennesey* with Abby Dalton. In 1954, he guest starred on the NBC legal drama *Justice*. Later, he appeared on ABC's *The Pat Boone Chevy Showroom*, and also guest starred with Tennessee Ernie Ford on *The Ford Show*. From 1964 to 1969, Cooper was vice president of program development at Columbia Pictures Screen Gems TV division and after leaving Columbia he went on to direct many TV shows. Cooper found renewed fame in the 1970s and 1980s as *Daily Planet* editor Perry White in the *Superman* film series starring Christopher Reeve.

Born in 1922, he had memories of Bing from his childhood which he described in his autobiography.

> And my mother, who always did have a big heart, had taken a girl-friend under her wing—Dixie Lee. Dixie lived with us. I liked her. More important, my mother liked her. My mother needed friends. Dixie was a few years younger than my mother, but that didn't matter.
>
> Dixie's man, then, was Bing Crosby. He was around our house a lot, of course, because he and Dixie were in love. So Bing had dinner with us a few nights a week for about a year. . . . But my mother, who became Dixie's unofficial big sister, laid down the rules, that Bing had to have her home at a certain hour, that their behavior in our house had to be circumspect, all that. In those days people behaved. Mostly.
>
> So Bing was around the house frequently. I particularly remember the Sunday morning ritual. I'd get up early, and as soon as some grown-up told me it was okay, I'd be out of the house and down to the beach. When I went outside those Sunday mornings, there would be Bing Crosby, asleep on the front porch swing, in his tuxedo and shoes with a flower in his buttonhole. I would get him a pillow and a blanket.
>
> (Jackie Cooper, writing in his book *Please Don't Shoot My Dog*, page 33)

Cooper went on to appear with Bing on the Kraft Music Hall on a couple of occasions in 1939.

Miriam Karlin died in June at the age of 85. The name will mean little to stateside readers but she was well known to many in the UK for her role in the TV sitcom *The Rag Trade*. Karlin appeared as Paddy - known for calling "Everybody out!" at regular intervals - in the original 1960s version of *The Rag Trade*. She would later reprise her role when the show was revived by ITV in the 1970s. Born Miriam Samuels in 1925, her

stage work included engagements with the Royal Shakespeare Company. She also became the first woman to play the traditionally male lead in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. It was her startling demise in *A Clockwork Orange*, though, for which some film fans will remember her best. As the so-called "Cat Lady", she was beaten to death with a phallic-looking sculpture in Stanley Kubrick's controversial take on Anthony Burgess's novel. The actress frequently played formidable Jewish matriarchs, among them Golde in the original West End production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Her involvement with Bing was through the *Bing Crosby Show* recorded in London in 1961. She sang "Fings Ain't Wot They Used T'Be" in an amusing scene with Bing.

Miriam Karlin sings with Bing.

Norma Zimmer, (July 13, 1923 – May 10, 2011) was a vocalist, best remembered for her 22-year tenure as Lawrence Welk's "Champagne Lady" on *The Lawrence Welk Show*. Under her maiden name of Norma Larsen, and later under her married name, Norma Zimmer was a top background singer in the Hollywood studios for more than a decade before joining the Welk show in 1960. She is however linked to Bing as she was at one time one of the Ken Darby Singers and backed Bing on his recording of "White Christmas". Norma also had a small unbilled part in *Mr. Music* (1950)

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

When Bing wrote his 1953 autobiography, *Call Me Lucky*, he began his memoir with an appropriate musical analogy: "The autobiographical kick is a new caper for me. Starting the story of my life makes my memory feel like an out-of-kilter juke box. When I drop a nickel into it, I'm not sure which story will play back." I now know what he meant as I continue to tap my memory bank for the 75th anniversary year of *The Club Crosby*.

My long association with Bing began in the summer of 1945, when we met on VJ Day at his movie alma mater, Paramount. It was the beginning of our enduring friendship that spanned four decades.

One of several special memories that play back in my mind took place in 1951. At that time I was living and working in Toronto. It was the year of Bing's 20th anniversary as a film and radio star. I had been hosting my Club Crosby program on Canadian radio stations for over four years. Our listeners were anxious to join me in congratulating Bing in a tangible and unique manner. It occurred to me that on such an auspicious occasion a decorative cake would be a fitting tribute. It didn't occur to me that getting the cake to California would be a very special assignment. Thanks to couriers and air delivery the cake, which was topped with one of Bing's 45 rpm recordings, arrived undamaged in Los Angeles.

Photos of the cake's departure from our radio studio and its arrival at Bing's Paramount dressing room are on the cover of Part 9 of my "Crosby Years" radio series. The flight attendants on the connecting flights were devoted Crosby fans. Bing was very pleased to be remembered on his anniversary day in such a tasty way. Press photos of the cake's delivery were distributed by Paramount and several staff members joined Bing for an unexpected cake and coffee break.

Bing cuts his anniversary cake in his dressing room at Paramount on September 30, 1951.

Among the most vivid memories of my times with Bing were the hours we shared at his Hillsborough home reminiscing back over his life and career. These lengthy interview sessions for our radio series, "The Crosby Years", are locked in my mind. Whenever I hear excerpts from these tapes I close my eyes and feel like I am back in his den on Robin Road.

Given the privilege of being with Bing for our "one on one" conversations I tried to ask him questions that I thought his long time fans might have asked him if they had been given the opportunity. We all possess Crosby

records that are our own favourites for both artistic and sentimental reasons. Despite his modest nature, I wondered if any of the recordings from his vast library were personal favourites. "Oh, a couple of records," he replied, "that I always thought sounded pretty good, 'My Isle of Golden Dreams' and some of the Richard Tauber songs like 'Yours Is My Heart Alone' and some of the Victor Herbert ballads (e.g. 'Sweethearts' and 'Thine Alone'). I thought the voice sounded pretty good on those, but maybe it was just because I was congratulating myself for having gotten into a new field."

Bing's inherent modesty was genuine. However, his own assessment of his ability as a singer was often a contradiction of his status in the world of music. His response to my enthusiastic opinion that his voice and vocal style were the musical benchmarks of the 20th century was disarming and self deprecating.

"No," he said, "I never thought my voice had anything distinctive about it. I just liked to sing – ever since I was a little boy. I was never conscious of developing a style, unique or otherwise. I don't believe the way I sang set any kind of style. It may have put them on to the kind of songs that would be successful, be popular, but I don't think anybody consciously set about to imitate any style of mine, because I don't think I had any kind of style. If I had a style it was probably composed of my imitating Al Jolson and Franklin Bauer and the singers who used to be on the old phonograph records."

Veteran Crosby collectors whose libraries date back to the early 1930's often compare his early recordings to his recordings of the late 1930s, the 1940s and beyond. It seems to many of those collectors that the Crosby style underwent a gradual subtle change from a full voice delivery to the softer, more relaxed style that is now so familiar. A good example of different styles is his two versions of "I Found a Million Dollar Baby" from 1931 and 1940.

It was an observation of some of his long time fans, but not something Bing himself had ever considered: "I'm not conscious of any great changes in the style of singing. I don't think I ever sing quite the same. No untrained singer ever does, because you never know what the condition will be of your throat. If I have been singing a great deal and not overdoing it, but singing regularly, I'm okay, but if I haven't been singing regularly and go to a record date and try to sing, it's not quite as effective."

Personally I treasure all his recordings from every decade and every era. From the jazz age to the swing era, his was the defining voice of the 20th Century.

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: See our back inside cover for one of Gord's letters to his Canadian members in 1948.

Gord's wonderful radio series, "The Crosby Years" remains available — see Trading Post for details.)

Honest, Abe

Abe Burrows (18 December 1910 – 17 May 1985) was an American humorist, author, and director for radio and the stage. He appeared on Bing's radio show a number of times in 1949 and in his autobiography - *Honest, Abe – Is There Really No Business Like Show Business?* - published in 1980 he had some memories of Bing.

... I was booked into a place in Las Vegas, El Rancho Vegas, but before I went there, I had an exciting experience in Hollywood. I was asked to appear as a guest on Bing Crosby's radio show.

I'll always be happy that I once knew Bing Crosby. I wasn't one of his close friends, but I worked with him many times, and when I was with him, Bing made me *feel* like one of his close friends.

When you're in any branch of show business, people always ask you questions about various big stars as though you knew them all personally. "What kind of a guy is Cary Grant?" "What is Barbra Streisand *really* like?" "Is Dustin Hoffman shorter than Al Pacino?" But when they ask you, "What kind of man is Bing Crosby?" they ask it in a curious "I-really-want-to-know" manner. There was something about Bing's casual style, his seeming ease and control, that made them realize there was something there besides what they saw on the screen.

He acted casual but behind it all was a sort of steely competence. One time in an interview I was asked, "What kind of man is Bing Crosby?" And I answered that he was warm, enjoyable, amusing, but if he should ever decide to become president of General Motors, he could swing that, too.

I did several guest shots on Bing's show, and one of them took place on the opening of a new series he was doing for a new sponsor, the Philco Dealers. I arrived early at the studio and was startled to see a great big busy-looking banner covering the entire back wall. There, in great big letters of gold on a blue background it said PHILCO DEALERS WELCOME BING CROSBY, et cetera, et cetera. *(Editor: Think Mr. Burrows may be confusing this with the Chesterfield Show banner. He did take part in the first Chesterfield Show broadcast on September 21, 1949)* It was huge and eye-catching, but also pretty distracting. I arrived before Bing and spoke to John Scott Trotter, his musical director. He and I stared at the thing and I said, "You think Bing is gonna like that?" John just shrugged and smiled a secret, knowing smile. Then Bing arrived. He crossed the studio toward us, saying hello to people on the show. Then he passed one of the studio pages, and as he went by him he pointed to the banner and said quietly, "Take that down," and kept walking over to John and me. That's all he said. No complaint. No shouting. Just, "Take that down." Within five minutes the banner

had gone. He acted just the way he sang. Cool and easy. He was that way with his fans.

I remember once in the fifties he called me and asked me to go see a movie with him on Wilshire Boulevard. I agreed but I was worried. I thought, "What is it going to be like, going to an ordinary movie with Bing Crosby?" I met him in front of the theater and I was amazed by what happened or rather what didn't happen. I thought we'd be mobbed by hundreds of autograph hunters and sightseers. Instead, people stood back and just watched Bing. They were quiet and respectful. If it had been Bob Hope, he'd have been mobbed by loving fans. But not Bing. The people looked at him with love and admiration but they didn't come too close.

One time I was walking with him outside of Paramount Studios and he was telling me a story when a kid came running up waving an autograph book, and before the kid could say anything, Bing said quietly and gently, "You don't want that," and kept walking and talking with me. The kid wasn't angry; he stood smiling and watched us walk away.

I once spent five interesting days with Bing on an ocean liner. This was in 1953. Carin *(Abe's wife)* and I had flown to London for the opening of the London company of *Guys and Dolls.* The show was a big hit there; we were feeling good and we decided not to rush back to New York on a plane. We booked passage on the beautiful *Liberte* of the French Line. Neither of us had ever sailed the Atlantic before. Carin was raised in Seattle and her voyages were limited to the ferry that crossed Puget Sound. My experience consisted of an occasional voyage on the Staten Island Ferry and once in a while, a long trip on the Hudson RiverDay Line, to Bear Mountain for picnics.

So when we boarded this great ship we were excited, and a few moments later we became even more excited when we ran into Crosby. Bing and his son Lindsay - he was fifteen, Bing's youngest - were coming back from a European trip.

Carin and I hurried to finish our chores. Unpacking, noticing that the stateroom was smaller than the photograph we had seen (we loved it anyway), trying to open the portholes (they wouldn't budge), rushing down to the dining room to reserve a table (something you had to do quickly or you'd get stuck with the wrong people for five days and fifteen meals). We arranged to sit with Bing and Lindsay for the whole trip.

Then we just strolled on the deck like people we had seen in the movies. And as we strolled I began to think about the Ship's Gala. Friends in London had told me about the tradition of the Ship's Gala, which is a big party on the last night of the voyage. This one was especially important to the crew because it was held for the benefit of the Sailors' Fund. Any performer who happens to be on the ship is asked to appear in the show. My friends warned me to be prepared.

Many performers feel a need to complain a bit when they are asked to do this. They grumble that they are on the, ship for "a rest," or say, "I don't have any accompanist with me," or make some other lame excuse. However, all of us admit that we'd feel terrible if we weren't asked, and one hour after we sailed I started worrying. The Gala was four days off but I was already wondering whether they'd want me to perform. An hour later, the ship's purser, a pleasant young Frenchman, came to me on the deck and asked if I would honor them by being the master of ceremonies. I was relieved and delighted, but I quietly, almost shyly, said, "Well, I guess I can if you want me to." Then the purser said, "I know you're a friend of Mr. Crosby's. Do you suppose he would do something in the show?" He evidently was nervous about approaching Bing directly. I knew that part of his eagerness to have me as the MC was my connection with Bing, but that didn't trouble me. I was eager to be included. I agreed to talk to Bing about it.

Bing and Linnie endure a wet day on their European trip.

That night I casually asked Bing if he would come on the show and sing a couple of songs. He looked at me with a very cool look and said, "No way. I'm on this ship to take it easy." I told him it was for the benefit of the sailors and that I was going to be the MC. He just shook his head. He said to me, "You're like Bob Hope. He'll go anywhere where there's a benefit. I'll come to the Gala but only as a member of the audience." I didn't press him, although I began to feel depressed. I couldn't imagine performing at a show while Bing Crosby is sitting at a table and just watching.

I decided I wouldn't let this spoil our trip. We didn't talk about the Gala again, and we all had a very pleasant time. Crosby was relaxed and charming company. Carin and I and Bing and Lindsay (we called him Linnie) took all our meals together, and what meals they were. It's the last time I remember getting all the caviar I could possibly stuff down. On the *Liberte,* caviar was considered an ordinary part of the menu; all you had to do was ask for it. Of course, if you were a celebrity or a friend of that celebrity, you got a lot more of it.

We shared our table with one other couple. They were from California and Bing knew them slightly. One thing I remember about the man was the unusual tie he wore with his dinner jacket. In those days passengers dressed for dinner every night except the first night out. However, instead of the conventional black bow tie this man wore a long black four-in-hand. He continually stroked it, as though he were very pleased with it and was waiting for some comment. The first time I saw that tie I whispered to Bing, "I never saw anybody wear a four-in-hand with a tux." Bing whispered back to me, "Don't say anything. Don't ask him about that tie because what he'll say is 'Where have you been? This is the new In thing.'" For the rest of the trip we never mentioned the tie and the poor guy just sat there stroking it and waiting for comment.

As we neared the night of the Gala, I began to get more and more nervous. The purser had corralled one more performer besides me. The great Ruth Draper, who was famous for her one-woman show, was on the ship. Miss Draper had agreed to do a few of her fantastic sketches. So the entire show would consist of Ruth Draper and me, with Bing Crosby sitting out front enjoying himself.

The day before the Gala I was walking on the deck thinking and worrying when Linnie Crosby came up to join me. His manner seemed very furtive and he quickly whispered to me, "Abe, I know you've been worried but it's going to be all right. He's just teasing you. He's going to do the show. Don't tell him I told you." And he fled before I could say anything. I'll always be grateful to Linnie for that.

About an hour later Bing came over to me and said, "I decided to do that dumb thing with you. I don't want you making a fool of yourself all alone."

I wasn't going to squeal on Linnie and I put on a very surprised and grateful act. "Hey Bing, that's great. Makes me feel a lot better." He said, "Forget it. Let's get that piano player from the ship's band and we'll rehearse tomorrow afternoon." Now that he was going on, he became completely professional. And he was damned well going to rehearse.

Abe plays as Bing sings in the *Liberte* show.

I went to my cabin and wrote a song for us to do together, a parody of "The Sunny Side of the Street." It was based on the fact that for days the ship had sailed in fog. Very little sunshine. The name of the captain of the *Liberte* was Commodore LeVecque, which fortunately rhymed with "deck." That led me to "Please, dear Commodore LeVecque, where's the sunny side of the deck?"

The next day we all met in the lounge. Bing, Carin, Linnie, the purser and the pianist. Bing liked the song I had written, and when we finished singing it together he said, "Burrows, if the ship's foghorn ever busted, we'd always have you."

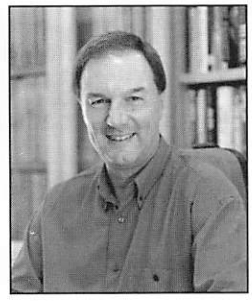
He ran through the songs he was going to do, including one of my favorites, "When the World Was Young," the lovely song that starts out "Ah, the apple trees… The next night we performed at the Gala and it went very well.

…He was someone we all thought would go on forever, and when he died it seemed to shock the whole country. There have been many articles and TV programs about him since he died; his many friends go on the air and talk about him, and true to form they mostly tell funny anecdotes. Bing had died of a heart attack as he finished a golf match, and a friend of his said, "Well, Bing died on a golf course, but not till he finished the eighteenth hole. He would have liked that." I miss him.

(Editor: Ruth Draper was an American actress and dramatist. She specialized in character-driven monologues and melodrama. Her best known pieces include 'The Italian Lesson', 'Three Women and Mr. Clifford', 'Doctors and Diets' and 'A Church in Italy'.)

KEEPING TRACK

Ken Crossland looks at the new releases



COMPACT DISCS

It did seem too good to be true, I guess! Malcolm's piece earlier in this issue tells us of the demise of the Crosby Enterprises releases via Collectors' Choice Music, the saddest element of which is the apparent immediate disappearance of these wonderful releases from the catalogues. Doubtless, the commitment on the part of BCE remains strong and we must all keep out fingers crossed for signs of a new distribution channel.

In the meantime, back to old style business, which after the flood of releases around Christmas, was always going to be a bit thin on the ground. Here's what caught my eye.

Bing Crosby - Through the Years, Volume 7 **Sepia 1167** **UK** **£7.00/$12.50**

1. Learn to Croon 2. Thanks 3. Muddy Water 4. Mississippi Mud 5. My Kinda Love 6. I Surrender, Dear 7. Oh! Tell Me Why 8. If You Love Me 9. Down the Old Ox Road 10. Black Moonlight 11. The Day You Came Along 12. After Sundown 13. Temptation 14. Love Thy Neighbour 15. May I? 16. Love in Bloom 17. I Love You Truly 18. June in January 19. Love Is Just Around the Corner 20. It's Easy to Remember 21. I Wished on the Moon 22. Silent Night 23. I'm an Old Cowhand 24. Song of the Islands 25. Sweet Leilani 26. Blue Hawaii 27. What Can You Do with a General? 28. Count Your Blessings Instead of Sheep 29. Liza (All the Clouds'll Roll Away) 30. In the Good Old Summertime 31. Out of Nowhere 32. Star Dust 33. Soon 34. The One Rose (That's Left in My Heart) 35. There's a Gold Mine in the Sky 36. My Heart Is Taking Lessons

This is the latest instalment in the wonderful series of releases that has now given us all of Bing's commercial output in strict chronology from 1926 through to 1954. This release is dominated by the tracks from Bing's mammoth "Musical Autobiography" set, which accounts for all but six of the 36 tracks. These short, summary versions of Bing's best-known recordings from the first two decades of his career are again presented in the order in which they were recorded, together with the relevant linking dialogue that Bing recorded separately. Some of the tracks end with the dialogue for the next track, which for those of us who would prefer just the songs, is good because it means you can skip on at the end of the vocal. However, that only works where the recording sequence of the tracks matched the way they were intended to appear on the final release. Where it doesn't, the linking dialogue is included ahead of the relevant vocal. Sound quality of the autobiography tracks is good, on a par with the Avid release of some years back if not quite up to the standard of the first CD appearance of the set in Japan during the 90s.

The six non-autobiography tracks include two solos from "White Christmas" (am I alone in thinking that apart from the title song, that film had a poor set of songs?), and Bing's first attempt at multi-tracking on "Oh, Tell My Why". That technique, pioneered by Les Paul and Mary Ford after Bing gave Les his first tape recorder, comes full circle with Bing dipping his toe in the water, although the "Crosby choir" on the second chorus has never worked for me. Far better if Bing had picked a song with a counterpoint melody, as Perry Como did for his experiments. Good sound though and a thoroughly welcome release. US members can obtain copies via Wig, as usual

Join Bing and Singalong **Hallmark** **UK** **£2.99**

1. Take Me Out to the Ball Game / Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis / Peggy O' Neil 2. K-K-K-Katy / Mairzy Doats and Dozy Doats / Old MacDonald Had a Farm 3. Aura Lee / Cuddle up a Little Closer 4. Daisy Bell / The

Bowery / After The Ball 5. Long, Long Ago / On the Banks of the Wabash / I Was Seeing Nellie Home 6. Shoo Fly, Don't Bother Me / Oh Dem Golden Slippers / On the Road to Mandalay 7. Give My Regards to Broadway / Mary's a Grand Old Name / You're a Grand Old Flag 8. When You Wore a Tulip / You Were Meant for Me 9. Goodbye, My Lady Love / Linger Awhile / The Gang That Sang "Heart of My Heart' 10. Doodle Doo Doo / All I Do Is Dream of You 11. Alice Blue Gown / I Love You Truly / When I Grow Too Old to Dream 12. A Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight / Toot, Toot, Tootsie / Ta-Ra-Ta-Boom-De-Ay

I'm tempted to say "don't get me started" but I will resist – for a while! This is a budget label release of Bing's first dalliance with the singalong craze, pioneered by Mitch Miller in the late 50s. Recorded in 1959 and originally released by Warner Bros, it features Bing alongside an accordion-driven vocal chorus, singing snatches of 33 titles (although Bing misses one or two completely, presumably for copyright reasons relating to his Decca recordings of the same titles.) This comes in the period that BCE have been covering and they doubtless own the rights (and presumably the master tapes) for this and the several singalongs that followed. This however is not from the BCE stable, as evidenced by the tracks being in mono, mastered presumably from an LP copy. The album is also available for download, but beware! There appears to be a speed problem on the download versions, although the CD is fine. I'll allow myself one comment. Would Sinatra ever have allowed himself to be associated with such drivel? Never in a million years, in my view, so why did Bing? It might have been popular at the time (and our editor reminds me that the album charted) but a vehicle for the greatest singing voice ever? Oh that Bing had had a greater concern for his artistic legacy!

Just in passing, if you do enjoy the singalong albums, you might also like the Pocket Songs CD release "You Sing the Hits of Bing Crosby" on the Traditions Alive label. This is a Karaoke release, so if you are prone to belting out "Heart of my Heart" from the Warner album, here you can try your pipes on 12 of Bing's better known songs. Don't forget to close the window.

Bing Crosby: Icon **Geffen Records** **USA** **$9.00**

1. Where the Blue of the Night 2. Pennies from Heaven 3. Sweet Leilani 4. White Christmas 5. I'll Be Seeing You 6. Swinging on a Star 7. Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral 8. Don't Fence Me In 9. It's Been a Long, Long Time 10. Dear Hearts and Gentle People 12. In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening.

Bing Crosby's Greatest Hits? This is about as close as you would come, I guess. 'Nuff said.

What else? Well, as the CCM episode indicates, the trend is clearly away from discs towards downloads and there are plenty of Crosby download albums upcoming from Amazon. Trailered titles include "Please Mr. Sun" and "Great Day", both of which feature a hotchpotch of radio titles – indeed both seem to be download versions of old vinyl LPs. "Bing Crosby at the Movies" offers 20 film songs from the late 30s whilst "Bing Crosby's Road to Hollywood" picks up film material from Bing's earliest screen appearances. Nothing new, but if you are missing anything from these eras, check them out on the Amazon website.

But, just when the disc seemed to be dying, what do we find but a new vinyl release!

Bing & Louis **Wax Time**
USA **$18.90**

This of course is Bing's 1960 duet album with Louis, garnished with a cover that UK readers might remember from the Music for Pleasure LP release back in the 1970s. As far as I can tell, it includes all 12 tracks from the session, including the often-omitted "Up a Lazy River", complete with an uncredited Johnny Mercer appearance. If like me, you are into or have re-discovered the joys of spinning discs, this might be one for you.

DVD / Video Games

L.A. Noire is a video game for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 developed by Team Bondi in conjunction with Rockstar

Games and published by Rockstar Games. *L.A. Noire* is set in Los Angeles in 1947, with players being challenged to solve a range of crimes. As the title suggests, the game draws heavily from both plot and aesthetic elements of film noir – stylistic films from the 1940s and 1950s that shared similar visual styles and themes including crime, sex and moral ambiguity and were often shot in black and white with harsh, low-key lighting. The game uses a distinctive colouring-style in homage to the visual style of film noir. The post-war setting is the backdrop for plot elements that reference the detective films of the '40s (as well as James Ellroy's novel *L.A. Confidential* and the Curtis Hanson film based on it), such as corruption and drugs, with a jazz soundtrack. Plenty of 1947 records are used including Bing's *Philco* performance of "My Heart is a Hobo".

The game sells for about $59 (£44.99 in the UK) and in the weekly software charts, the worldwide Top 10 for June 4 had the Xbox 360 version of *L.A. Noire* top with weekly sales of 214, 579 closely followed by the PlayStation 3 version with sales of 208,503. It's one way to get youngsters exposed to Bing.

What's on the Web?

Nothing to report on DVD front, so time for a look at what else has been appearing on the web. First stop has to be Bing's "official home" at www.bingcrosby.com . This is the site that is run by Bing Crosby Enterprises, and has recently had a pretty comprehensive make over which Richard Baker has covered earlier in this issue. It now includes lots of video and audio material, much of which is never likely to make it to CD or DVD but is rare and interesting for us enthusiasts. Lots of streaming audio too. **Not to be missed.**

Our friends at eBay recently offered an acetate of Bing and Rosie Boswell, calling the first inning of the Pittsburgh Pirates 1947 season. Here's how the seller describes the disc.

> *"They called it the Bing Crosby inning. The game was played at Forbes Field. Rosie Boswell was the first voice of the Pirates, and whilst most of her broadcasts were solo, here she was joined by co-owner, Bing Crosby. These 3 acetates were recorded in the studio of the Sicttes Hines at 1030 Forbes St, Pittsburgh."*

The price? A cool $10,000. Mind the stampede.

US co-editor Greg Van Beek tells us that Chicago area broadcaster Chuck Schaden has shared online his interviews with performers and personalities of the golden age of network radio, and included are these very interesting conversations with a couple of Bing's longtime associates,

John Scott Trotter (May 10, 1972, 30 minutes): http://www.speakingofradio.com/interviews/trotter-john-scott/

Ken Carpenter (February 17, 1975, 31 minutes): http://www.speakingofradio.com/interviews/carpenter-ken/

For the complete archive, go to: http://www.speakingofradio.com/interviews/.

Finally, who remembers **Tower Records**? I do, and in particular, I remember the very first store in Sacramento, Ca. where former "BINGANG" editor and dear friend, Al Sutton took me on one of my first visits to the USA. It became a global chain, and a regular haunt for most record buyers. It's gone now, but there is an interesting website about its rise and fall, with a documentary company looking for funding to complete a film that tells the story. The site is worth a browse at:
http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1280611212/all-things-must-pass-the-rise-and-fall-of-tower-re?ref=users

Happy listening!

ken@kencrossland.co.uk **http://www.kencrossland.co.uk**

Loose Ends

The BBC Radio 4 programme *Loose Ends* is broadcast on Saturday evenings and is described as "Clive Anderson and guests with an eclectic mix of conversation, music and comedy." On June 25, one of the guests was Lady Lucinda Lambton, (also known as Lady Worsthorne). She is a British writer, photographer and broadcaster on architectural subjects. Lucinda left school without qualifications, and became a professional photographer. It was in that role that she met Bing. She described how she was asked to photograph Bing walking down the street in London. After she had taken many photos she invited Bing back to her home to meet her pregnant mother and have lunch. As they went into the house, her mother was up a ladder and Lucinda shouted up to her "Bing Crosby is here. Would you like to meet him?" Mother was so surprised that she fell off the ladder into Bing's arms!

Announcement

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

46th ANNUAL DINNER / MEETING

Weetwood Hall, Conference Centre & Hotel
Otley Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 5PS, UK
Telephone: 0113 230 6000 Website: www.weetwood.co.uk

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2nd 2011, 2pm - 10pm

A cordial and warm invitation is extended to all members, their partners and friends to attend our forthcoming dinner / meeting. This is the 46th annual dinner held in Leeds to celebrate Bing's life and times, and as usual, we shall have some interesting DVD material for you to see, using the excellent facilities at Weetwood Hall available for this purpose.

We have kept the official start time at 2 p.m. to enable us to pack more into the time we have but apart from this, tracks from the latest Crosby CDs will be playing from 1 p.m. onwards alongside a PowerPoint presentation of Bing photos.

A three-course Carvery Dinner will be provided. Please book by sending a cheque for £24 per person (£20 for the meal, £4 for room-hire expenses) to Michael Crampton. Y'All Come! You will be amongst friends.

Special prices of £65 (single) and £85 (double) have been agreed for ICC visitors wishing to stay overnight at Weetwood Hall. We'll have a get-together on the Saturday night with whoever is there.

Tonight and Every Night

We sometimes give details of how Bing is mentioned in song and now Michael Collins writes to tell us about a mention of our Mr. Crosby in a film.

The movie is *Tonight and Every Night* (1945) and it came hot on the heels of Rita Hayworth's successful pairing with Fred Astaire in two earlier films as well as her successful partnership with Gene Kelly in *Cover Girl* which came out the previous year. It belongs to that group of films which Rita herself was happiest making and which, in retrospect, she was most proud to have made. This was back in the days when she was still regarded as a song and dance artiste rather than as a *femme fatale.* Her most famous role as the eponymous star of *Gilda* was to come along the following year, a film which would prove to be a turning point in her career. She doesn't actually sing, of course. As was the case in all her films, her singing voice is dubbed. On this occasion it was overlaid by the vocal talents of Martha Mears, but she does get to dance and very memorably too.

The film is loosely based on a play called "Heart of the City" which gives a largely fictionalised account of Soho's famous Windmill Theatre (here called the Music Box) which reputedly stayed open throughout the Blitz. The score was by Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne. "Anywhere", one of the songs from the movie's score, was nominated for an Academy Award but it lost out to Rodgers & Hammerstein's "It Might As Well Be Spring." Rita at that stage was so popular that she no longer needed a big name co-star to share the credits. She received sole billing and it was her name alone which appeared above the title.

As happened in all musicals of that era, the creaking storyline needed some kind of plausible crisis. Here it came in the form of a fire which broke out and which threatened to burn the place down. The fire was quickly extinguished and the Music Box saved but, in the great tradition of British theatre, the show had to go on. To the rescue came an electrician and general factotum who, as it happened, had an eccentric hobby - playing the xylophone - as well as a secret yen to perform in public. This combination met the requirements of the plot to perfection. The actor, Basil Lambert, was in real life an excellent xylophone player, so good that he secured a place in the Cleveland Orchestra. However, he soon discovered that it was hard to make a living out of the xylophone, that is "if you play it right." He wisely concluded, much in the manner of Jack Benny with his violin, that the way to go was to play it wrong. He did and as a consequence carved out a lucrative career for himself in the vaudeville circuit.

His intervention made for an effective and entertaining bit of comic business especially with Rita Hayworth dancing in the background to lend him moral support. At the same time, within the context of the plot itself, his entrance as a mere stage hand inevitably met with a tepid response. "Who did you expect,' he dolefully complained, 'Bing Crosby?" The reference could hardly be more topical or more apt. Fresh from his recent Oscar win, Bing had now reached the very pinnacle of his fame, just as the Love Goddess was fast approaching hers. Between them, they provided more box office drawing power than most of Hollywood combined. Sadly, their respective studios, Paramount and Columbia, didn't see things quite that way, with the result that what could potentially have been the greatest commercial combo in cinema history never got their act together in the end.

Michael Collins

BING CROSBY'S OFFICIAL FAN CLUB

The Club Crosby

CANADIAN BRANCH

GORD ATKINSON
Canadian President

494 Lansdowne Avenue
Toronto 4, Ontario

December 16, 1948.

Dear Member:

Our sincere apologies for being so long in sending you your membership card, but the printers took over six weeks to send them to us, and as a result were just sending yours on to you now. In order to compensate for this long delay you'll find your card is dated today. Rest assured that such a delay will never occur again. The next issue of, "BINGANG" will be sent to you from Florida, where it is published three times a year. Your autographed photo of Bing will be sent on to you from California in the near future.

Please feel free to write to me at any time, whether its about Bing, the Club, our radio meeting, or just a line to let us know that things are meeting with your approval. Remember this is your Club, and want to feel that your running it!

On the back of your membership card you will find a number; your number is #1114. This is very important because every Canadian member has a number in the Club!

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Bing-cerely yours,

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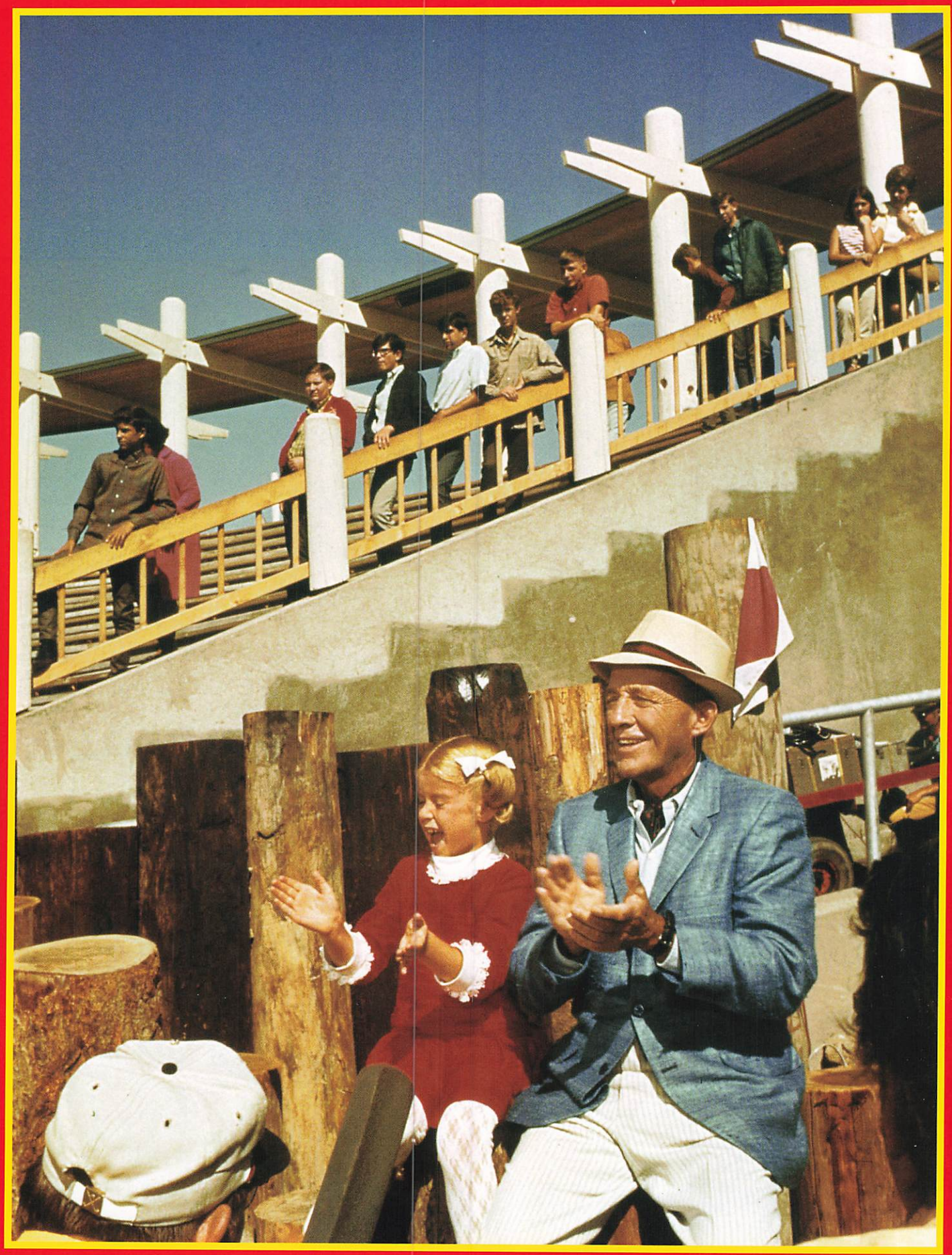

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Tel:+44 (0)191 387 4248 Email: gary@dh3digital.co.uk